



Mae Brechu yn achub bywydau
Vaccination saves lives



Protection against meningitis and septicaemia



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This leaflet explains why it's important that teenagers and young people under the age of 25 should receive the MenACWY vaccine.

What is meningococcal disease?

Meningococcal disease is caused by several groups of meningococcal bacteria, the most common of which are A, B, C, W and Y. Meningococcal bacteria can cause meningitis (inflammation of the lining of the brain) and septicaemia (blood poisoning).

The same bacteria that cause these serious diseases are also commonly carried in the back of the nose and throat, especially in older teenagers and young adults, without causing any illness.

How common is it?

Everybody is at risk from meningococcal disease, but:

- the under-fives are most at risk; and
- teenagers and young adults are the second most at risk group.

Since the MenC vaccine was introduced into the UK routine vaccination programme in 1999 and the MenACWY vaccine in 2015, there has been a big reduction in cases of groups C and W meningococcal disease.

Although rare, meningococcal disease is very serious and needs urgent treatment in hospital. It can lead to life-changing disabilities such as amputations, hearing loss, brain damage and scars. If it is not diagnosed early it can even be fatal.





Why do I need to get the MenACWY vaccine?

Older teenagers are at higher risk of getting meningococcal disease, so you need to get vaccinated now to protect yourself. Vaccination also reduces the risk of you carrying the bacteria and so protects other people around you. You need this vaccine even if you have previously received the MenC vaccine, as the MenACWY vaccine will protect you against meningococcal group C disease as well as give you extra protection against groups W, A and Y disease.

It will still be important to know the signs and symptoms of meningitis and septicaemia (meningococcal disease) even if you are vaccinated. This is because there are other bacteria that can also cause these illnesses, including the meningococcal group B disease that is not covered by the ACWY vaccine.

What are the signs and symptoms of meningococcal disease?

Look out for any of these symptoms



Fever, cold hands and feet



Vomiting



Drowsy, difficult to wake



Confusion and irritability



Severe muscle pain



Pale, blotchy skin
Spots or rash
(see glass test)



Severe headache



Stiff neck



Dislike of bright lights



Convulsions or seizures

Source: © meningitisnow.org

Do the glass test

Someone with septicaemia may develop a rash of tiny 'pin pricks' which can turn into purple bruising. This rash does not fade under pressure. You can do the glass test by pressing the side of a drinking glass against the rash. If the spots don't fade under pressure, get medical help immediately. The rash can be more difficult to see on dark skin, but may be visible in paler areas, especially the soles of the feet, the palms of the hands, the abdomen, or on the inside of the eyelids or roof of the mouth.



Never wait for a rash. It can be a late sign or may not appear at all.

Septicaemia can happen with or without meningitis. Not everyone gets all the symptoms and they can appear in any order. Make sure you know the signs and symptoms and get help immediately if you are concerned.



Meningitis and septicaemia are very serious and need urgent medical help immediately. If you can't get in touch with your doctor, ring 999 or go to the emergency department of your nearest hospital.



Who is eligible for the MenACWY vaccine?

- Teenagers aged 13 to 14 years of age (school year 9) are routinely offered the MenACWY vaccine alongside the 3-in-1 teenage booster vaccine.
- Young people under the age of 25 also remain eligible if they have never received the MenACWY vaccine.
- Children and young people aged from 10 years up to their 25th birthday if they have an incomplete or unknown MenC vaccination history.
- People with an increased risk of meningococcal disease due to an existing medical condition or treatment, travel, their job, or close contact with a case of meningococcal disease may also be recommended to receive the MenACWY vaccine.

How will I know when I am due to receive the MenACWY vaccine?

In most areas of Wales, the MenACWY vaccination is routinely offered in school year 9. In a few areas, where the vaccine is not given in school, you will be invited to have it at your GP practice.

If you have left school and you missed your MenACWY vaccination you should make an appointment with your GP practice.

If you are a student going to university or college for the first time (including overseas and mature students) and you have not yet had the MenACWY vaccine you can receive it up until your 25th birthday. You should make an appointment with your GP practice to have the vaccine. Ideally, the vaccine should be given at least two weeks before you start university.



It's also a good idea to check that you have also had two doses of the MMR vaccine, as there continue to be outbreaks of mumps and measles at colleges and universities. If you have not previously had two doses of the MMR vaccine, you can ask your GP practice for the vaccine.





What if I miss the vaccination and I am already at university?

First-time university students are at particularly high risk in the first weeks of term, so you should make every effort to have the vaccine before you start. If you have not had the vaccine you can go to the University Health Centre or register with a GP practice at university and arrange to get the vaccine there, but try and do that straight away – ideally in ‘freshers’ week.

! Don't delay it. The sooner you have it the better.

Must I have the MenACWY vaccine?

All vaccinations in the UK are voluntary but it's recommended that all eligible teenagers and young people have the vaccination. This protects not just yourself from very serious illnesses but also others, including infants who may be particularly at risk from infection.

Consent

If you are under 16 years old and you receive a consent form at school, make sure you and your parent or guardian read the information, sign the form and return it to school as soon as possible.

It's best to involve your parent or guardian in your decision about having the vaccine, but in some circumstances you can give permission yourself if you fully understand what is being offered.

If you are aged 16 or over you are able to give permission for the vaccination yourself.

Are there any reasons why I should not be vaccinated?

There are very few teenagers and young people who should not have the MenACWY vaccine. You should not have it if you have had a severe (life-threatening) reaction to any ingredient of the vaccine or to a previous dose of MenACWY vaccine. If you have a minor illness without a fever, such as a cold, you should still have the vaccination. If you are ill with a fever, put the vaccination off until you are better.

Also, speak to your doctor or nurse before having the vaccination if you:

- have a bleeding disorder; or
- have had convulsions (fits) not associated with fever.

Is the MenACWY vaccine safe?

As with all vaccines, reports of side effects are closely monitored and reviewed. The MenACWY vaccine has been used for many years across the world and has an excellent safety record. Serious side effects from the vaccine are rare.

Are there any side effects?

Your arm may be sore with some swelling, redness or tenderness where you have had the injection. Sometimes a small painless lump develops, but this usually disappears within a few weeks. Other side effects may include fever, headache, dizziness, feeling sick and swollen glands. Very rarely, some people have an allergic reaction soon after a vaccination. This may be a rash or itching affecting part or all of the body.

If you have a fever and feel unwell after the vaccination take paracetamol to help you feel better. Read the instructions on the bottle or packet carefully and take the correct dose for your age.

You should not take paracetamol before or after the vaccination just because you think you might get a fever.

! Remember, don't take medicines that contain aspirin if you are under 16 years old.



Even more rarely, some people can have a severe reaction soon after the vaccination, which causes breathing difficulties and may cause them to collapse. This is called an anaphylactic reaction and can also happen with other medicines and food.

These reactions are extremely rare and nurses are trained to manage them. People who have an anaphylactic reaction can be successfully treated and usually recover within a few hours.

Young people or their parents or guardians can report suspected side effects of vaccines through the Yellow Card scheme. You can do this online at yellowcard.mhra.gov.uk or by calling the Yellow Card hotline on 0800 731 6789 (Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm).

Where can I get more information?

Meningitis Now

Visit: www.meningitisnow.org

Free helpline: **0808 80 10 388**
(9am to 4pm Monday to Friday)

Email: helpline@meningitisnow.org
(emails are answered during office hours only)

Meningitis Research Foundation

Visit: www.meningitis.org

Free helpline: **080 8800 3344**
(9am to 5pm Monday to Friday)

Email: helpline@meningitis.org
(emails are answered during office hours only)

If you have any questions or want more information, you can visit **111.wales.nhs.uk**, talk to your doctor or nurse or call **NHS 111 Wales**.

If **111** is not available in your area, please call **0845 46 47**. Calls from landlines and mobiles cost 2p per minute (plus your telephone provider's usual charge).

You can find out more about the vaccine, including its contents and possible side effects online at **www.medicines.org.uk/emc**. You will need to enter the name of the vaccine in the search box and read the patient leaflet. The MenACWY vaccines currently used are called (Nimenrix) and (Menveo).

The routine vaccination schedule that shows you which vaccinations are offered in Wales is available from:
111.wales.nhs.uk/pdfs/adultschedule.pdf

To order more copies of this leaflet, visit:
www.publichealthwales.org/HealthInformationResources

To find out how the NHS uses your information, visit:
111.wales.nhs.uk/lifestylewellbeing/yourinfoyourrights

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