

Meningococcal b (Men-b) vaccine

Immunization has saved more lives in Canada in the last 50 years than any other health measure.

What is the Men-B vaccine?

The Men-B vaccine protects against infection from one of the most common types of meningococcal bacteria, type B. The vaccine is approved by Health Canada.

The Men-B vaccine is not part of the routine immunization schedule in B.C. However, a vaccine for meningococcal C disease is routinely provided to infants and a vaccine that protects against meningococcal types A, C, Y and W is provided to students in grade 9. Both of these vaccines are provided for free. For more information see [HealthLinkBC File #23a Meningococcal C conjugate \(Men-C\) vaccine](#) and [HealthLinkBC File #23b Meningococcal quadrivalent vaccines](#).

Who should get the vaccine?

In B.C., the Men-B vaccine is provided free to those 2 months of age and older who have been in close contact with a case of meningococcal B disease.

The vaccine is recommended, but not provided free, for those who are at risk of meningococcal B infection due to certain medical conditions, including:

- No spleen or a spleen that is not working properly
- Immune system disorders including complement, properdin, factor D or primary antibody deficiencies

The vaccine is also recommended, but not provided free for:

- Laboratory workers routinely exposed to meningococcal bacteria
- Military personnel

- Those traveling to an area where the risk of meningococcal B disease is high

For information on high risk travel areas, contact a travel clinic.

If you want to be protected against meningococcal B disease, you may purchase the vaccine at some travel clinics and pharmacies.

The vaccine is given by injection as a series of 2, 3 or 4 doses. The number of doses depends on how old you are when the immunization series begins. Speak with your health care provider for more information.

It is important to keep a record of all immunizations received.

What are the benefits of getting the vaccine?

The vaccine provides long-term protection against meningococcal B infection, a serious and sometimes fatal disease.

What are the possible reactions after the vaccine?

Vaccines are very safe. It is much safer to get the vaccine than to get meningococcal disease. Common reactions to the vaccine include soreness, redness and swelling where the vaccine was given. Fever, crankiness, sleepiness, muscle aches and headache may also occur. These reactions are usually mild and generally last 1 to 2 days.

Reactions, including fever, are more common in children under 2 years of age if the Men-B vaccine is given with other routine childhood vaccines.

Acetaminophen (e.g. Tylenol®) or ibuprofen* (e.g. Advil®) can be given for fever or soreness. ASA (e.g. Aspirin®) should not be given to anyone under 18 years of age due to the risk of Reye Syndrome.

*Ibuprofen should not be given to children under 6 months of age without first speaking to your health care provider.

For more information on Reye Syndrome, see [HealthLinkBC File #84 Reye syndrome](#).

It is important to stay in the clinic for 15 minutes after getting any vaccine because there is an extremely rare possibility, less than 1 in a million, of a life-threatening allergic reaction called anaphylaxis. This may include hives, difficulty breathing, or swelling of the throat, tongue or lips. If this reaction occurs, your health care provider is prepared to treat it. Emergency treatment includes administration of epinephrine (adrenaline) and transfer by ambulance to the nearest emergency department. If symptoms develop after you leave the clinic, call **9-1-1** or the local emergency number.

It is important to always report serious or unexpected reactions to your health care provider.

Who should not get the Men-B vaccine?

Speak with your health care provider if you or your child:

- Has had a life threatening allergic reaction to a previous dose of meningococcal vaccine, or any part of the Men-B vaccine including kanamycin
- Are taking the medication Soliris®

There is no need to delay getting immunized because of a cold or other mild illness. However, if you have concerns speak with your health care provider.

What is meningococcal B infection?

Meningococcal B infection is caused by bacteria called meningococcal type B. It can cause serious and life-threatening infections including meningitis, an infection of the lining that covers the brain, and septicemia, an infection of the

blood. Permanent complications of infection include brain damage, deafness, and loss of limbs. About 1 in 20 people who get sick may die.

Meningococcal infection is spread from person to person by coughing, sneezing, or close face-to-face contact. It can also be spread through saliva. Babies and young children can become sick through sharing soothers, bottles or toys used by other children. Older children and adults can become sick through activities such as kissing, or sharing food, drinks, cigarettes, lipstick, water bottles, mouth guards used for sports or mouthpieces of musical instruments.

Mature minor consent

It is recommended that parents or guardians and their children discuss consent for immunization. Children under the age of 19, who are able to understand the benefits and possible reactions for each vaccine and the risk of not getting immunized, can legally consent to or refuse immunizations. For more information on mature minor consent see [HealthLinkBC File #119 The Infants Act, Mature Minor Consent and Immunization](#).

For more information on immunizations, visit ImmunizeBC at <https://immunizebc.ca/>.



ImmunizeBC



BC Centre for Disease Control
Provincial Health Services Authority

For more HealthLinkBC File topics, visit www.HealthLinkBC.ca/more/resources/healthlink-bc-files or your local public health unit. For non-emergency health information and advice in B.C. visit www.HealthLinkBC.ca or call **8-1-1** (toll-free). For the deaf and hard of hearing, call **7-1-1**. Translation services are available in more than 130 languages on request.