

Is the meningococcal vaccine safe?

Yes, both vaccines are safe; however, there are risks with any vaccine. About half of the people who get the vaccine will have pain and redness where the shot was given, but because the vaccine is not made from the whole bacteria, it cannot cause bloodstream infections or meningitis. A small percentage of people who get the vaccine develop a fever. Vaccines, like all medicines, carry a risk of an allergic reaction, but this risk is very small.

A few cases of Guillain-Barré Syndrome, a serious nervous system disorder, have been reported among people who got the new vaccine, MCV4 (meningococcal conjugate vaccine). At this time, there is not enough evidence to tell if the vaccine caused the disorder. Health officials are investigating these reports.

Does the meningococcal vaccine work?

Yes. The new meningococcal vaccine protects about 90 percent of the people who receive it from meningococcal disease caused by types A, C, Y, and W-135. These types cause almost two-thirds of all meningococcal disease in teenagers in the United States. It does not prevent type B, which causes about one third of the cases in teenagers.

Does the meningococcal vaccine prevent all cases of meningitis?

No. However, 63 percent of the meningitis cases in 18-22 year olds occurring in Oklahoma from 2000 through 2005 could have been prevented by vaccination. The meningococcal vaccine does not include type B. Scientists have not been able to make a vaccine that will protect against type B. Other bacteria and viruses can also cause meningitis. More information about these causes can be found at the National Meningitis Association Web site listed in the box in the next column.

Where can I get the vaccine for my son or daughter?

If your child has health insurance you can obtain the meningococcal vaccine from your health-care provider.

Local county health departments have the vaccine available now at no charge for all children who:

- Have no health insurance,
- Are Medicaid eligible,
- Are Native American,
- Or whose health insurance does not pay for vaccines,

and are either 15 through 18 years of age, or who do not have a spleen, have certain immune system problems, or who will be traveling to certain parts of the world.

Is this vaccine required to attend school in Oklahoma?

This vaccine is not required to attend kindergarten through the 12th grade in Oklahoma. However, it is required for students who are enrolling in colleges and other schools after high school who will live in dormitories or on-campus student housing.

Where can I get more information?

For more information contact your healthcare provider or local county health department or visit these Web sites:

National Meningitis Association at www.nmaus.org

Immunization Action Coalition at <http://www.vaccineinformation.org/menin/index.asp>

Institute for Vaccine Safety, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health at <http://www.vaccinesafety.edu/cc-mening.htm>

National Network for Immunization Information at <http://www.immunizationinfo.org/>



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