

What is the MenACWY vaccine?

The MenACWY vaccine helps to protect against disease caused by four of the main groups of meningococcal bacteria - A, C, W and Y.

Meningococcal group W (MenW) has historically been rare in the UK but since 2009 cases have increased. A particularly aggressive strain of MenW is causing disease in all age groups but there has been significant increase in university students.

The MenACWY vaccine was introduced across the UK in August 2015 in response to the rise in MenW cases. The MenACWY vaccine also provides a MenC booster.

Remember, no vaccine will offer complete protection from meningitis. Remaining vigilant is vital.

Who is entitled to the MenACWY vaccine?

All teenagers around the age of 14 are offered this vaccine as part of the routine immunisation schedule. The MenACWY vaccine is usually given at school at the same time as the tetanus, diphtheria and polio booster.

The MenACWY vaccine is also offered to first year university students* under the age of 25. First year university students are at greater risk of infection due to higher carriage rates of the bacteria. They are also more likely to be living in cramped student accommodation.

The MenACWY vaccine is also recommended for people with certain long-term health conditions who are at greater risk. These include individuals with no spleen, or a spleen that does not work properly or with complement disorders (an immune disorder).

The MenACWY vaccine is used as a travel vaccine for travellers attending the Hajj and those visiting countries with a higher incidence of meningococcal disease, such as parts of Africa and Latin America.

How many doses are required?

One dose is required.

Can this vaccine cause meningitis?

No, the MenACWY vaccine is not a live vaccine and cannot cause meningitis.

Are there any side-effects?

As with all vaccines, side-effects can occur and are usually short-lived (24 hours). The most common side-effects in teenagers are redness, hardening and itching at the injection site, fever, headache, nausea and fatigue.

Can I get the vaccine privately?

Yes. A variety of pharmacies, travel clinics and private GP practices offer this vaccine for travel purposes and may be able to provide this vaccine for general protection.

Prices will vary, so you may wish to contact more than one provider before making your choice. Expect to pay between £40 – 70 privately for this vaccine.

Do you have further questions?

Contact our Helpline on 0808 80 10 388 or email helpline@meningitisnow.org

*Most Scottish students will have already been offered the MenACWY. If you live outside Scotland but are attending a university in Scotland, ensure you get the MenACWY vaccine before you go.

Meningitis C?

The term “Meningitis C” comes from the abbreviation “MenC”. We avoid the use of this term as it is incorrect and can cause confusion.

The word “Men” is an abbreviation for the word meningococcal, not meningitis as is often mistaken. Meningitis and meningococcal are not exactly the same.

Meningitis is the inflammation of the membranes that surround and protect the brain and spinal cord. Meningococcal refers to a type of bacteria that can cause meningitis. There are different groups of meningococcal bacteria, for example meningococcal group B which is commonly abbreviated to MenB (other groups include MenA, MenC, MenW and MenY).

Meningitis Now is here to help you. We are saving lives and rebuilding futures through awareness, research and support.

If you have any questions, or are interested in finding out how we can help, please get in touch.

Meningitis Helpline: 0808 80 10 388 (UK)

Email: helpline@meningitisnow.org



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