



# Meningococcal C-Conjugate Vaccine

## What is invasive meningococcal disease (IMD)?

IMD is a serious, life-threatening disease caused by bacteria called *Neisseria meningitidis*. It can lead to serious infections of the blood (septicaemia), and/or the covering of the brain and spinal cord (meningitis).

## How is it spread?

The bacteria that cause IMD can live in the body, especially in the nose and throat. Some people can carry the bacteria and never get sick. The bacteria are spread by droplets in the air from coughing or sneezing. They can also spread from the saliva of an infected person when kissing or when sharing common items, e.g., drinks, straws, toothbrushes, water bottles, cigarettes, lipstick, or musical instruments with mouthpieces.

## What is invasive meningococcal disease-serogroup C (IMD-C)?

IMD-C is one type of these bacteria. It can result in serious complications and/or death. Individuals infected with IMD-C may develop skin scars, hearing loss, kidney problems or require limb amputations.

## Why is meningococcal C-conjugate vaccine so important?

The meningococcal C-conjugate vaccine provides long-lasting protection against illness caused by IMD-C and its complications.

Other IMD serogroups are not prevented by this vaccine. However, most outbreaks or clusters of IMD in schools and communities have been caused by Serogroup C. In Ontario, many of the cases of IMD-C are seen in adolescents and young adults.

## Who is eligible for publicly funded meningococcal C-conjugate vaccine?

Beginning in January of 2005, meningitis C vaccine became available at no cost to parents for children age 12 or in Grade 7, and youth 15 to 19. As of January 2004, the vaccine has also been offered to all one-year-old children.

## Is the vaccine safe?

Yes. The vaccine is safe and only one shot is needed. The most common side effects tend to be mild and include soreness, redness, itching

and/or rash where the needle was given. Other side effects such as headache, dizziness and nausea can occur. More serious side effects are rare. The benefits to immunizing against this disease far outweigh the risks.

## Who should not get the vaccine?

People should not get the vaccine if they:

- Are allergic to any component of the vaccine. The nurse will ask about any allergies before she gives the needle.
- Have ever had an anaphylactic reaction to a vaccine, i.e. hives, difficulty breathing, swelling of the tongue and throat.
- Are acutely ill or have a fever.
- Have received a meningitis vaccine called "Menomune" in the past six months.
- Are pregnant or breastfeeding. The need for vaccine should be discussed with a health care provider.

## What should I do if serious side effects do occur?

Take your child to your doctor or nurse practitioner or the nearest emergency department if any of the following symptoms occur within three days of getting the needle:

- Hives.
- Swelling of the mouth and throat.
- Trouble breathing, hoarseness or wheezing.
- High fever (over 39° C or 103° F).
- Convulsions or seizures.
- Other serious reactions to the vaccine.

## Will I get a record of this vaccination?

The nurse will provide your child with a record of this vaccination. **It is very important to keep this record. Your child may need proof of this at a later time.**

If you have questions about meningitis or the vaccine, please call the Vaccine Preventable Disease Program at the Haldimand-Norfolk Health Unit at 519-426-6170 or 905-318-6623.

Updated March 2014

