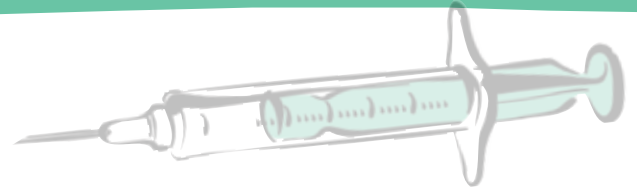




# Enhanced Meningococcal Vaccine Program

## For Grade 7 Students



### IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR PARENTS

Attached is a consent form for meningococcal (MenC-ACWY) vaccine. With your consent, this vaccine will be given when the second dose of hepatitis B vaccine is given at your child's school in February and March.

Please review this fact sheet and return the Consent for Meningococcal (MenC-ACWY) Vaccine form to the school immediately.

#### 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.

To prevent the spread of meningococcal disease, objects that have come into contact with another person's mouth should not be shared. Good hand hygiene and the use of sleeves, the shoulder or tissues to cover coughs or sneezes are important to remember to stop the spread of the bacteria.

#### What are the symptoms of meningococcal disease?

The symptoms of meningococcal disease can vary widely, but include sudden onset of high fever, severe headache, vomiting, stiff neck and a rash. Sensitivity to light, sleepiness, confusion and, in severe cases, coma may also occur.

#### What are the complications of meningococcal disease?

The effects of meningococcal meningitis can be severe. Approximately one in 10 patients will die, and 11 to 19% of survivors will suffer some form of permanent disability, such as hearing loss, neurological damage or limb loss.

#### Is there a vaccine to prevent meningococcal disease?

There are a number of vaccines that protect against some, but not all, of the various serogroups (strains) that cause meningococcal disease.

Since 2005, routine immunization against meningococcal (serogroup C only) disease has been recommended and publicly funded for children one year of age. Students in Grade 7 and 15-19 year-olds were also offered the same vaccine as a "catch-up" program. Studies now show that a routine dose of meningococcal vaccine for adolescents is necessary to provide continuing protection against this disease. The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care is now offering a vaccine that provides protection against serogroup C and also provides protection against three additional strains (serogroups A, Y and W135) that cause meningococcal disease. The vaccine is provincially funded for students attending Grade 7 in Ontario and will be offered at school-based immunization clinics. Registered nurses will give the vaccine to students in schools.

#### Is the vaccine safe?

**Yes.** The vaccine is safe and at this time only one shot is needed. The most common side effects tend to be mild and include soreness and/or redness where the needle was given. Other side effects such as headache and tiredness can occur. More serious side effects are rare. **The benefits to immunizing against this disease far outweigh the risks.**

## Who should NOT receive this vaccine?

### Individuals who:

- Have a latex allergy.
- Are acutely ill or have a fever.
- Are allergic to the vaccine or any of its components.
- Have previously had a neurological condition called Guillian-Barré Syndrome.
- Have been vaccinated within the last six months with another *Neisseria meningitidis* polysaccharide vaccine.
- Have been vaccinated within the last one month with another *Neisseria meningitidis* conjugate vaccine.
- Are on high dose corticosteroids or immunosuppressive agents, or who have immunosuppressive illness. You should delay vaccination until condition/treatment has resolved whenever possible.
- Are pregnant or breastfeeding. You should consult with your health care practitioner.

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

Take your child to your doctor, 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.

## How do I ensure that my child receives this vaccine at school?

Thoroughly read this information. Sign the vaccine consent form and make sure it is returned to your child's school as soon as possible.

## 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.

Any vaccine your child receives through the Haldimand-Norfolk Health Unit will automatically be updated on his/her immunization record at the Health Unit. Please notify the health unit every time your child receives vaccine anywhere else (i.e.: doctor's office or travel clinic) so that we can update his/her record.

You can update your child's record online at [www.hnhu.org](http://www.hnhu.org) or by calling a member of the Vaccine Preventable Disease program (VPD) at 519-426-6170 or 905-318-6623.

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