

# Meningococcal A, C, Y, W-135 Vaccine (Menactra®)



## FACTS

### What are meningococcal A, C, Y, W-135 infections?

- Meningococcal A, C, Y, W-135 infections are caused by the bacteria, *Neisseria meningitidis*. Meningococcal A, C, Y, W-135 bacteria are contagious.
- The bacteria are quite common and live in the back of the nose and throat in about one in ten teens and adults without making them sick. In rare instances, the bacteria can overcome the body's natural defenses and cause serious disease.
- Five types of the *Neisseria* bacteria (A, B, C, Y, and W-135) cause almost all infections. This vaccine covers A, C, Y, and W-135 only.
- There are two serious forms of the disease:
  - An infection of the lining of the brain called "meningococcal meningitis".
  - A blood infection called "meningococemia".

### How do meningococcal A, C, Y, W-135 infections spread?

The bacteria spreads from person to person through saliva, usually through coughing, sneezing, kissing, or sharing things like food, drink, water bottles, musical instrument mouthpieces, toothbrushes, cigarettes, lipstick, or lip-gloss.

The bacteria can also be contracted while travelling to parts of the world, like countries in sub-Saharan Africa, where meningococcal infections are more widespread.

### What are the symptoms of the disease?

The earliest signs are fever, drowsiness, reduced consciousness, and irritability. Other signs may include severe headache, vomiting, stiff neck, and light sensitivity. In many cases, red spots on the skin appear which do not disappear when pressed.

Symptoms of meningococcal infections can become serious and possibly life-threatening very quickly, sometimes within hours.

### What are the risks of the disease?

- Meningococcal disease progresses rapidly, and is fatal in 10 per cent of cases.
- Between 10 to 20 per cent of people that survive these infections will have permanent damage such as hearing loss, neurological impacts, scarring or loss of limbs.

### Why should my child be vaccinated?

**Menactra® is legally required for attendance in school.**

Menactra® is very effective against meningococcal A, C, Y, W-135 infections when given just before or early in the teenage years. Teenagers and young adults are among those at high risk for serious meningococcal A, C, Y, W-135 infections because a higher number of them carry the bacteria in their noses or throats.

If your child plans to attend college or university, you should know that many of these institutions require students to have this vaccine before they can stay in residence or dormitories.

### Who should not get this vaccine?

Menactra® should **not** be given to anyone who has:

- a known allergy to any component of the Menactra® vaccine.
- had a reaction to any type of meningococcal A, C, Y, W-135 vaccine (Menactra®), or to diphtheria vaccine.
- a high fever or a serious infection worse than a cold on the day of the school clinic.

### Is Menactra® safe?

Yes. The most common side effects are soreness, swelling and redness at the site where the needle was given. Occasionally, some people will develop a mild fever, fatigue, loss of appetite or headache. These side effects usually last for one or two days.

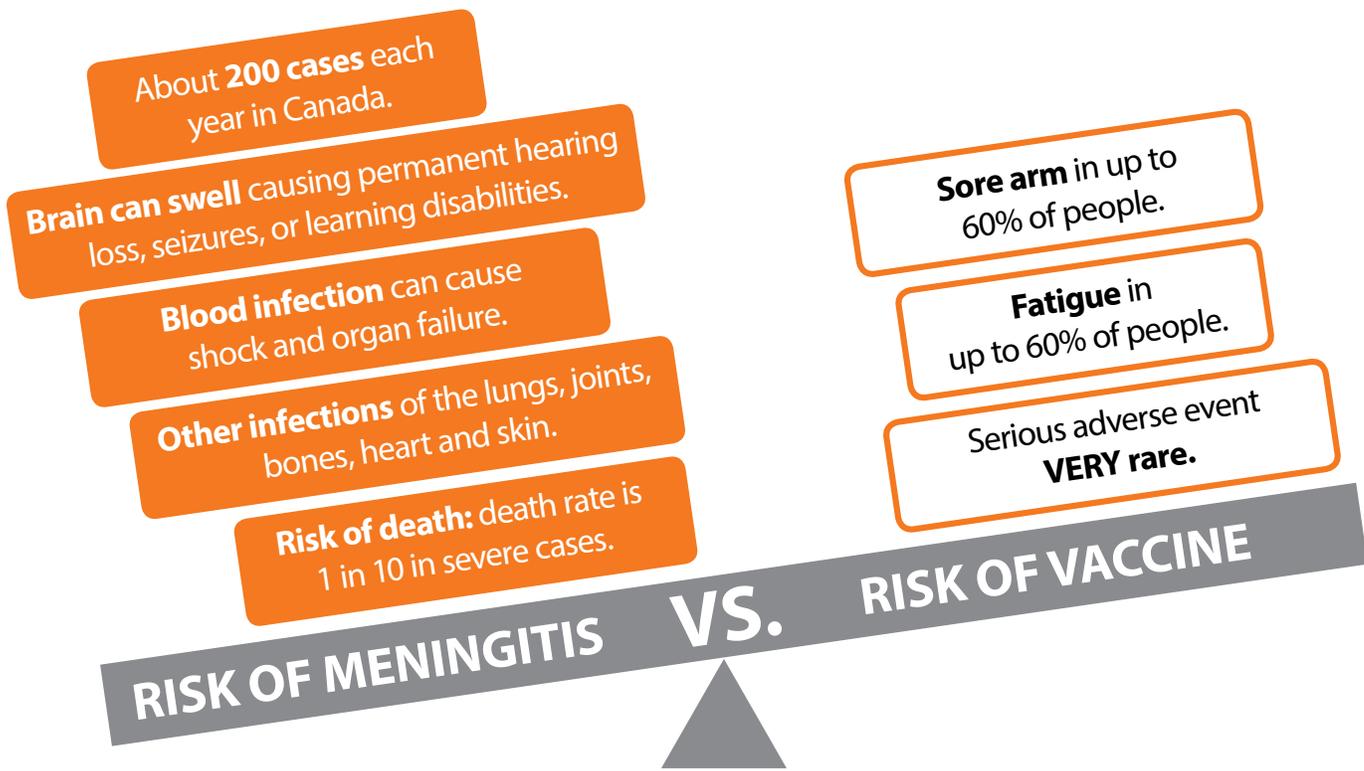
Research shows that serious side effects are very rare.

### What if I decide not to vaccinate?

**The vaccine is required by law** (*Immunization of School Pupils Act Amendment, 2014*). Students who are not vaccinated may be suspended from school. Your child will be at risk of getting meningitis if you decide not to vaccinate.

**Parents who choose not to vaccinate must complete a legal statement, known as a Statement of Conscience or Religious Belief. This form must be notarized. There are some children who cannot get a vaccine for medical reasons. A doctor can fill out a medical exemption form. These forms must be brought to the Halton Region Health Department. More details are available at [halton.ca/immunize](http://halton.ca/immunize).**

# Risk of meningitis vs. risk of vaccine



## How can I prepare my child for vaccination?



Talk to your child about the vaccine.



Complete and return the consent form.



Review helpful ways to deal with fear or anxiety (count to ten, look away from needle, focus on breathing).



Make sure your child eats on clinic day.



Make sure your child wears a short sleeve shirt on clinic day.

## Visit our website for more information

[halton.ca/immunize](http://halton.ca/immunize)

### Learn more about:

- Vaccine preventable diseases
- Vaccines
- Safety
- Side effects
- Ingredients
- Importance of vaccinations to protect your family

**If you have questions, ask your family doctor or dial 311.**