

Meningitis Vaccination

“What You Need To Know”

Meningitis is an infection that can lead to a dangerous swelling of the fluid surrounding the brain and spinal cord. Either viruses or bacteria can cause the disease. The symptoms you feel and how a doctor treats the infection depend on what kind of organism is causing it.

There are two kinds of meningitis; each caused by a different type of organism:

Viral Meningitis is usually not as serious as bacterial meningitis, and patients usually get better with minimal treatment.

Bacterial Meningitis is often referred to as meningococcal meningitis. It can cause outbreaks in a specific area, such as a college campus. Infections can cause serious illness, long lasting effects on the nervous system, or death within 24 to 48 hours.

Since the early 1990's, there has been an increase in meningitis outbreaks in the United States. In fact, the number of cases has nearly doubled among young adults (15 to 24 years of age) from 1991 to 1996. Fortunately, this type of meningococcal infections can potentially be prevented with a vaccine. The meningitis vaccination can protect against strains A, C, Y, and W-135. The American College Health Association recommends that students consider their risk for potentially fatal meningococcal disease.

College students have a greater risk of meningococcal infection than the general populations because of activities that are often a part of college life, such as smoking, being around someone who smokes (passive smoking), going out to bars, drinking alcohol, and living in a dormitory.

The meningitis vaccine is generally safe and effective. However, some reactions can occur.

- Soreness, redness, or swelling at the injection site usually lasts 1 - 2 days
- Mild fever

Protective antibody levels will be reached for all four strains by the 28th day after vaccination. The immunization protection lasts at least 8 - 11 years.

Immunizations should be deferred during the course of any acute illness.

As with any vaccine, vaccination with Menactra™ -A/C/Y/W-135 may not protect 100% of susceptible individuals.

Please contact the Visiting Nurse Service Immunization Manager for further information on getting the vaccination. The number is 722-8299, ext. 296.

Visiting Nurse Service, Inc.
4701 N. Keystone Ave.
Indianapolis, IN 46205
Phone: 317-722-8200 Fax: 317-722-8253
Website: www.vnsi.org