

What to Know About Meningococcal Disease

Meningococcal (muh-nin-jeh-KOK-ul) disease is a serious illness that can cause deadly swelling of the lining of the brain and spine.

What do symptoms of meningococcal disease look like?

- High fever.
- Severe headache.
- Stiffness of neck.
- Pain in joints.
- Nausea.
- Vomiting.
- Confusion.
- Sensitivity to light.

Can children get meningococcal disease?

Yes, anyone can get meningococcal disease at any age. Symptoms in young children may look different, including inactivity, slowness, irritability, vomiting, eating poorly, or a bulging at the soft-spot on their head.

Is my family or am I at risk of getting meningococcal disease?

Although not very common, infants, older children, and young adults are at increased risk. Meningococcal disease is spread through contact, such as sharing eating utensils, and being close to someone who is sneezing and coughing.

What are the long-term effects of meningococcal disease?

- Even with antibiotic treatment, roughly one in 10 infected people will die.
- Of those who survive, one in five will have lifelong disabilities, such as deafness, brain damage, or loss of limb(s).

Can you prevent meningococcal disease?

Yes, there are vaccines that can prevent five types of meningococcal disease.

How do you treat meningococcal disease?

You can treat meningococcal disease with antibiotics. However, the treatment needs to be started as soon as possible after being diagnosed with meningococcal disease for the best chance of full recovery.

How to Prevent Meningococcal Disease

What vaccines are available to prevent meningococcal disease?

There are vaccines to prevent meningococcal groups A, B, C, W, and Y. Ask your healthcare provider which vaccines you or your child should get.

Who should get vaccinated and when?

Meningococcal vaccination is recommended for preteens and teens. Children 2 months through 10 years old and adults who are at increased risk may also need a meningococcal vaccine. Talk with your trusted healthcare provider about your family's vaccination options.

Are meningococcal vaccines safe?

Yes, vaccines go through rigorous testing before approval and use.

Are meningococcal vaccines effective?

Yes, since the use of the vaccine there has been an 87% decrease in meningococcal disease (all types).

How long have meningococcal vaccines been used?

Vaccines to prevent meningococcal disease have been in use since the 1970s.

Has there been meningococcal disease in Ohio?

In 2024, Ohio had several confirmed cases.

Vaccines are the best method to prevent vaccine preventable diseases, including meningococcal, that you or your family might come in contact during your daily activities such as, traveling to trade shows, weddings, picking up supplies, and hosting families.

Talk to your trusted healthcare provider today about meningococcal vaccines for your child and family.

Sources:

[CDC: About Meningococcal Disease](#)

[CDC: Meningococcal Disease Symptoms and Complications](#)

[CDC: Meningococcal Vaccination](#)

[CDC: Risk Factor for Meningococcal Disease](#)