



# Q&A

Dec. 14, 2017

## Okanagan meningococcal disease immunization program

### Questions and Answers

**Q: What is meningococcal disease?**

**A:** Meningococcal disease (also known as Invasive Meningococcal Disease) is a serious illness caused by a type of bacteria called *Neisseria meningitides*. The risk to the general population is low.

**Q: What are the symptoms of meningococcal disease?**

**A:** The symptoms of meningococcal disease can vary depending on the affected body parts. The two common types are meningococcal meningitis and meningococcal septicemia.

1. Meningococcal meningitis occurs when bacteria cause inflammation of the protective lining around the brain and spinal cord. Symptoms of meningitis include sudden fever, headache, stiff neck, nausea, vomiting, increased sensitivity to light, and confusion.
2. Meningococcal septicemia occurs when bacteria enters the blood. Symptoms of meningococcal septicemia include tiredness, severe aches and pain, vomiting, and skin rash.

**Q: What is the difference between meningococcal disease and meningitis?**

**A:** Many types of bacteria, viruses, and fungi can cause inflammation of the protective lining around the brain and spinal cord that is known as meningitis. *Neisseria meningitides* is among the bacteria that can cause meningitis that is often very severe.

**Q: When is an outbreak declared?**

**A:** Outbreaks are declared when there is an unexpected increase in the number of cases of a particular illness.

**Q: What is the risk to the general public?**

**A:** The risk to the general public is low. Meningococcal infection is spread from person to person by coughing, sneezing, or close face-to-face contact. It can also be spread through saliva. This can occur through activities such as kissing or sharing of food, drinks, cigarettes, lipsticks, water bottles, mouth guards used for sports, or mouthpieces of musical instruments.

**Q: Is the Meningococcal Quadrivalent vaccine a routine immunization?**

**A:** Yes, this vaccine has been offered to grade nine students in BC since 2016, as part of the routine immunization program. If you have received this vaccine as part of the grade 9 immunization program in 2016/2017, you don't need to be re-immunized.

Students who have not received this vaccine are recommended to attend an immunization clinic at their school. For more information about clinic locations and times, visit [interiorhealth.ca](http://interiorhealth.ca). If you are unsure your child has received this vaccine, call your local public health centre for a record.

**Q: Can individuals who are not 15 to 19 years old receive the vaccine?**

**A:** Yes, please contact your local pharmacist or travel clinic to purchase vaccine.

**Q: Where can individuals who are 15 to 19 but do not attend school receive the vaccine?**

**A:** Please check [interiorhealth.ca](http://interiorhealth.ca) for immunization clinic dates and times.

**Q: Where will immunizations be offered and when?**

**A:** Immunization clinics for students in Grades 9 to 12 will begin on Thursday, December 14. Please check [interiorhealth.ca](http://interiorhealth.ca) for updated dates and times. For individuals ages 15-19 who do not attend a secondary school, check [interiorhealth.ca](http://interiorhealth.ca) for local clinic dates and times. Clinics will continue over the next several weeks to ensure this population is immunized. Individuals attending a clinic to receive the vaccine should bring their care card and immunization record if available.

**Q: What reduces the spread of infection?**

**A:** Avoid sharing water bottles, cigarettes, lipstick or utensils with others. Individuals who show symptoms such as rapid onset fever, headache, stiff neck, or vomiting should seek medical attention immediately.

**Q: Where can I find more information about meningococcal disease and the Meningococcal Quadrivalent vaccine in BC?**

**A:** For more information on meningococcal disease, visit HealthLink BC <https://www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthlinkbc-files/meningococcal-quadrivalent-vaccines>.

If you have questions about how to obtain a vaccine, visit [interiorhealth.ca](http://interiorhealth.ca).