

Meningococcal W

Information Sheet

WHAT IS MENINGOCOCCAL DISEASE?

Meningococcal W disease is caused by bacteria (germs) called *Neisseria meningitidis*. It is a serious disease and can cause death or permanent disability, such as deafness.

Meningococcal disease can cause infection of the membranes around the brain (meningitis) or septicaemia (blood poisoning). There are different groups of meningococcal disease – A, B, C, Y and W – but the signs are similar for all. Group W can also present with gastro-intestinal symptoms (vomiting and diarrhoea).

HOW COMMON IS MENINGOCOCCAL W DISEASE?

As at 30 November 2018, Northland has had seven (7) reported cases of Meningococcal W, including three deaths. Young children, teenagers and young adults are most at risk *

We haven't had any cases of Meningococcal W in Northland before.

CAN MENINGOCOCCAL W DISEASE BE PREVENTED?

Yes. There is a vaccine, Menactra, which is 80-85 percent effective, not only against Meningococcal W, but also includes A, C, and Y.

To try and prevent more people getting Meningococcal W, the vaccine is being offered to those people in Northland aged 9 months to under 5 years (*the most vulnerable and 'at-risk' age group), and aged 13 to under 20 years (*the highest carriage age group). We want to vaccinate at least 85 percent of this age group within a two and a half week period.

This vaccine is different from the MenzB vaccine given in 2004-5, which only protects against Type B and **does not protect against Type W**.

HOW DOES THE VACCINE WORK?

The vaccine works by causing your body's immune system to produce substances called antibodies. These antibodies fight the Meningococcal W bacteria. If a vaccinated person comes into contact with the germ, the body is then better prepared to destroy it.

Many young people will carry the bacteria that cause Meningococcal W disease in their nose or throat, without any sign of illness. This vaccine also helps to reduce carriage and provide herd immunity (i.e. protection across the community even for those not vaccinated).

HOW IS THE MENINGOCOCCAL W VACCINE GIVEN?

The Meningococcal W (Menactra) is given in ONE INJECTION. The injection is given in the top of the arm or thigh (young children). The injection may hurt or sting a little. After vaccination you need to wait 20 minutes under observation. The vaccine provides protection after about 10 days.

DOES IT COST ME ANYTHING?

No, this vaccination is FREE, for age groups 9 months to under 5 years and 13 years to under 20 years, if given in this programme.

IS THE VACCINE SAFE?

Yes. Serious side effects are very rare. The Meningococcal W (Menactra) vaccine has a very good safety record and has been widely used in Europe, UK and Australia since 2005. The vaccine does not contain live bacteria and it is not possible to get the disease from the vaccine.

The vaccine provides protection after about 10 days. It is approximately 80-85% effective.

WHAT ARE THE SIDE EFFECTS OF THE MENINGOCOCCAL W VACCINE?

Most people have no or minor side-effects.

You/your child may get a red swollen arm that hurts. There may be burning or a stinging reaction, or the arm can feel heavy. A few people get headaches, body aches, sleepiness, fever, or vomiting or diarrhoea. These are all normal reactions.

Serious reactions usually occur within 20 minutes of vaccination. Very rarely there may be damage to the nerves of the arm.

This is called brachial plexus neuropathy and may occur in 1:100,000 people who receive an injection in the arm.



WHO SHOULD NOT RECEIVE THE MENINGOCOCCAL W VACCINE?

The vaccine should not be given to:

- Those ill with a high fever (>38 degrees)
- Serious medical problems such as immunosuppression. HIV or evolving neurological conditions.

If you have concerns, please discuss these with your doctor or nurse.

HOW YOUR CHILD MAY FEEL FOLLOWING MENINGOCOCCAL W IMMUNISATION AND WHAT YOU CAN DO TO HELP.

Mild reaction

- Your child may have some pain, burning, stinging, swelling or redness at the place where the injection was given for the first day or two
- Their arm may also feel heavy, these are normal side effects and may last a day or so.

What to do for reactions

- Place a cold, wet cloth or ice pack on the place where the injection was given. Leave it on for a short time
- Rubbing the arm will make these reactions worse
- Consider Paracetamol for the pain.

Serious reaction

- Rarely your child may have a high fever, i.e. over 38°C
- Headache, sleepiness, body pain, diarrhoea and vomiting.

What to do for reactions

- Give extra fluids to drink
- Give Paracetamol for the pain.

If you have any concerns ring your doctor or Healthline on 0800 611 116.

WHAT HAPPENS TO THE DATA COLLECTED DURING THE MENINGOCOCCAL W VACCINATION PROGRAMME?

The information on the consent form will be used to:

- Check whether you agree to you/your child being immunised against Meningococcal W
- Check any health issues with your family doctor (GP)
- Help assess this immunisation programme.

The information you give us about yourself/your child will be kept by the Public Health Nursing Service of the District Health Board and/or your family doctor. Use of and access to the information is covered by the Health Information Privacy Code. If you want to see this information or correct any details, contact your doctor or the public health nursing service.

You do not have to provide this information, but it helps us to keep your child safe. We do need your consent to vaccinate your child if she/he is aged under 16 years.

WHAT ABOUT PEOPLE WHO DON'T WANT TO HAVE THE MENINGOCOCCAL W VACCINE?

Meningococcal disease is a serious disease that can quickly become life threatening. If, after receiving enough information you choose not to receive the vaccination or decide not to allow your child to be vaccinated this will be respected.

