



UK Health  
Security  
Agency

**NHS**

Protect yourself against  
**meningitis and  
septicaemia**  
with the MenACWY vaccine



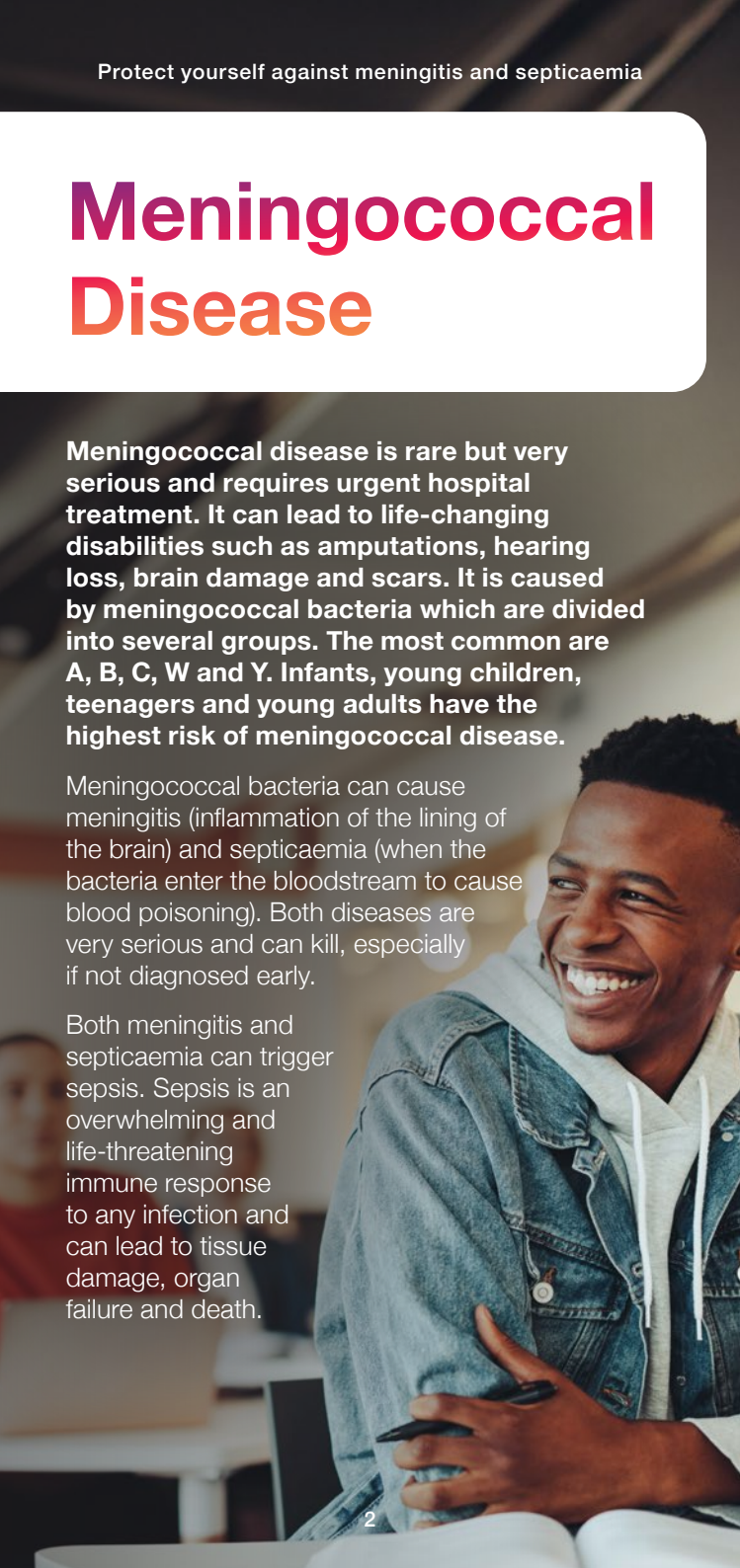
**i**mmunisation  
the safest way to protect your health

# Meningococcal Disease

**Meningococcal disease is rare but very serious and requires urgent hospital treatment. It can lead to life-changing disabilities such as amputations, hearing loss, brain damage and scars. It is caused by meningococcal bacteria which are divided into several groups. The most common are A, B, C, W and Y. Infants, young children, teenagers and young adults have the highest risk of meningococcal disease.**

Meningococcal bacteria can cause meningitis (inflammation of the lining of the brain) and septicaemia (when the bacteria enter the bloodstream to cause blood poisoning). Both diseases are very serious and can kill, especially if not diagnosed early.

Both meningitis and septicaemia can trigger sepsis. Sepsis is an overwhelming and life-threatening immune response to any infection and can lead to tissue damage, organ failure and death.



## Why do I need to get the vaccine?

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Older teenagers and young adults are at higher risk of getting meningococcal disease, so you need to get vaccinated now to protect yourself. This is a safe and very effective vaccine that has been part of the routine teenage programme since 2015. It also reduces the risk of other people around you becoming infected. You may have had MenC vaccination as a baby and toddler but this will not protect you against other meningococcal groups.

The MenACWY vaccine will increase your protection against MenC and help to protect you against three other meningococcal groups (A, W and Y). This vaccine will not protect you against all forms of meningococcal disease, like MenB, and so it is still important to be aware of signs and symptoms.

## Do I have to have MenACWY vaccine?

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No, but the best way to help protect yourself is by having the MenACWY vaccine. You, or your parent/guardian, have to consent to have the vaccine. You will usually be offered the vaccine at school in year 9 when you are 13-14 years old. Don't worry if you have missed your vaccination, you are eligible to receive the free MenACWY vaccine from your school nurse or school immunisation team if you are still at school or from your GP practice, until your 25th birthday. There are 2 MenACWY vaccines, they are called MenVeo and Nimenrix, you can read the Patient Information leaflets here:

Nimenrix:

[www.medicines.org.uk/emc/product/4118/pil](http://www.medicines.org.uk/emc/product/4118/pil)

MenVeo:

[www.medicines.org.uk/emc/product/2939/pil](http://www.medicines.org.uk/emc/product/2939/pil)

## Does the vaccination hurt?

Nobody likes injections, but it is very quick. The needles used are small and you should feel only a tiny pinprick. If you are a bit nervous about having the injection, tell the nurse or doctor before you have it.

## Signs and Symptoms

**Initially meningococcal disease can be like a bad case of flu. But anyone affected will usually become seriously ill within a few hours. Early treatment can save your life so it is sensible to be aware of some main signs and symptoms.**

Severe headache

Stiff neck

High temperature

Seizures/fits

Drowsy or difficult to wake

Confusion and/or irritability

Cold hands and feet

**Be aware of the signs and symptoms**

One or more of these symptoms may develop and they can appear in any order and be mixed between the two illnesses. It is important to seek early medical advice if you or a friend have symptoms of concern or a condition that is getting rapidly worse.

It is important to know the signs and symptoms of meningitis and septicaemia even if you are vaccinated as there are many other causes of these conditions.



**These common symptoms**

Dislike of bright light

Rapid breathing

Vomiting/diarrhoea

Stomach cramps

Pale blotchy skin

Rash/bruising rash\*

Joint or muscle pain

A full description of the signs and symptoms of meningitis and septicaemia including images and videos can be found at [www.meningitis.org](http://www.meningitis.org) and [www.meningitisnow.org](http://www.meningitisnow.org)

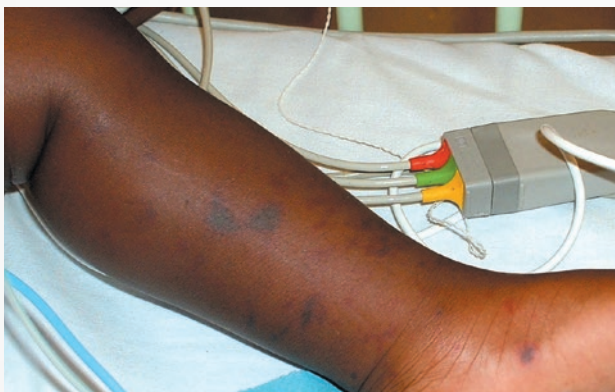
\*see 'Do the glass test' overleaf

## Do the glass test

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Someone with septicaemia may develop a few spots or a widespread rash with fever. Later on the rash can develop into purple blotches that do not fade under pressure. You can do a test for this by pressing the side of a drinking glass against the rash. If you have a fever and a rash, and the rash does not fade under pressure, get medical help immediately by calling 999 or getting someone to take you to the nearest hospital emergency department. Never wait for a rash. It can be a late sign or may not appear at all. If someone is ill and getting worse get medical help immediately.

On dark skin, check inside the eyelids or roof of the mouth where the spots may be more visible.



## Are there any side effects?

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It is common to get some swelling, redness or tenderness where you have the injection. You may also get a headache or feel generally a bit unwell but these symptoms should disappear after one or two days. If you are worried about any symptoms seek medical advice through NHS 111 or your GP practice as usual.



If you experience any suspected side effects to the vaccine, you can report these on the Yellow Card website, by calling 0800 731 6789 (9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday) or by downloading the Yellow Card app.

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**For meningitis, the following charities provide information, advice and support:**

**Meningitis Research Foundation,**

free helpline 080 8800 3344 –  
Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm

**Meningitis Now,** free helpline  
0808 80 10 388 – Monday to Thursday  
9am to 4pm and Fridays 9am to 1pm

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If you have any questions or want more information, talk to your doctor, school nurse or the practice nurse at your doctor's surgery.

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Paper copies of this in leaflet in English are available to order.