

Meningococcal disease

About	<p>Meningococcal disease is a rare but severe infection that occurs when meningococcal bacteria invade the body from the throat or nose.</p> <p>Meningococcal bacteria are carried in the nose and throat of a small proportion of healthy people (in about 10%) and are spread through close prolonged contact. The bacteria are more commonly found in teenagers and young adults. There are a number of different strains of meningococcal bacteria. Worldwide, the main strains that cause meningococcal disease are A, B, C, W and Y.</p> <p>Most people with meningococcal infection fully recover, but some people who survive can develop long-term health complications including limb deformity, skin scarring, deafness and possible loss of brain function. Meningococcal W disease has a higher death rate than meningococcal C and meningococcal B infections and may be fatal in about 1 in 10 cases.</p>
How is it spread?	<p>It is not easy to catch meningococcal disease. While the bacteria can be spread via droplets from the nose or throat during coughing and sneezing, close and prolonged contact with a person who has the bacteria in their nose or throat is usually needed for the bacteria to spread. As meningococcal bacteria cannot live long outside of the body, the infection can also not be picked up from water supplies, swimming pools, bed linen or pillows.</p> <p>After exposure to the bacteria, it usually takes from three to four days to become ill, although sometimes it can be as little as one day or as long as 10 days.</p>
Symptoms	<p>Meningococcal disease occurs in two main forms (or a combination of these two forms):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• meningococcal meningitis – when the bacteria infect the lining around the brain and spinal cord• meningococcal septicaemia – when the bacteria invade the bloodstream and cause blood poisoning. <p>In older children and adults symptoms of meningitis can include headache, fever, vomiting, neck stiffness, drowsiness and confusion, and discomfort looking at bright lights.</p> <p>There may also be a rash, particularly with meningococcal meningitis where there is often a characteristic purplish-red rash which does not fade under pressure.</p> <p>If anyone has the above symptoms, seek urgent medical attention. Early treatment can sometimes prevent serious complications.</p>
Complications	<p>Meningococcal infections can progress rapidly to serious disease or death in previously healthy persons and long term effects may include limb deformity, skin scarring, deafness or loss of brain function.</p>
Vaccination can prevent disease	<p>Some types of meningococcal disease can be prevented with immunisation and these include meningococcal A, B, C, W, and Y.</p> <p>There is no single vaccine that provides protection against all strains of meningococcal disease.</p> <p>This School Immunisation Program is offering free meningococcal ACWY vaccination to all Year 10 students. This vaccine does not include protections against the meningococcal B strain.</p> <p>Free meningococcal ACWY vaccine is also available for 15 to 19 year olds from your GP.</p>
How many doses?	<p>One dose of meningococcal ACWY vaccine is required.</p>

Is the vaccine safe?	The meningococcal ACWY vaccine is safe and effective. Meningococcal ACWY vaccination programs targeting adolescents have been effectively implemented in the UK since 2015 and in the US since 2005.
What does it contain?	The vaccine contains the antigens of four serogroups (A, C, W135 and Y) which are conjugated to a carrier protein. It also contains other additives in very small amounts to either assist the vaccine to work or to act as a preservative.
Are there any side effects?	Serious side effects from the vaccine are extremely rare. Minor side effects that may be experienced include tenderness, redness or swelling at the site of injection and, low grade fever.
Why is meningococcal ACWY vaccine being offered to Year 10 students?	Some of the highest rates of meningococcal carriage occur among 15 to 19 year olds and this age group can transmit the meningococcal bacteria to people who are at increased risk of infection, including young children. Vaccinating 15 to 19 year olds aims to reduce the risk of meningococcal disease caused by strains A, C, W and Y in this age group, and to reduce the spread of meningococcal disease caused by these strains. Vaccinating this group will protect these individuals immediately and the wider community in the longer term.
What if my child has already been vaccinated against meningococcal C?	People who have been vaccinated against meningococcal C in childhood are still recommended to receive the meningococcal ACWY vaccine in adolescence. Vaccination against meningococcal C has been included in the National Immunisation Program Schedule since 1 January 2003. From 2003 to June 2008, meningococcal C vaccine was provided in a catch-up program for all children aged 1 to 19 years. This means that many Year 10 students will have received meningococcal C vaccine.
What if my child has already been vaccinated against meningococcal ACWY?	If your child received a meningococcal ACWY vaccine since they turned 14 years old, they do not need to be vaccinated in the school program. Adolescents who have previously received a conjugate meningococcal ACWY vaccine (Menactra®, Menveo® or Nimenrix®), for example via private prescription, can receive another dose of meningococcal ACWY vaccine, even if the previous dose was within the past five years. There should be at least a four week interval between doses. Repeat vaccination carries no additional risk of adverse reactions.
Where can I get more information about meningococcal disease?	Visit the Gold Coast website at: www.goldcoast.health.qld.gov.au/our-services/immunisation Queensland Health website at: www.conditions.health.qld.gov.au/HealthCondition/condition/14/33/95/meningococcal-disease National Centre for Immunisation Research and Surveillance at: www.ncirs.org.au/ncirs-fact-sheets-faqs/meningococcal-vaccines-australians Australian Government website to access resources about the meningococcal ACWY vaccine including information in other languages at: www.health.gov.au/health-topics/meningococcal-disease Call: 13 HEALTH (13 43 25 84) Make an appointment with your doctor