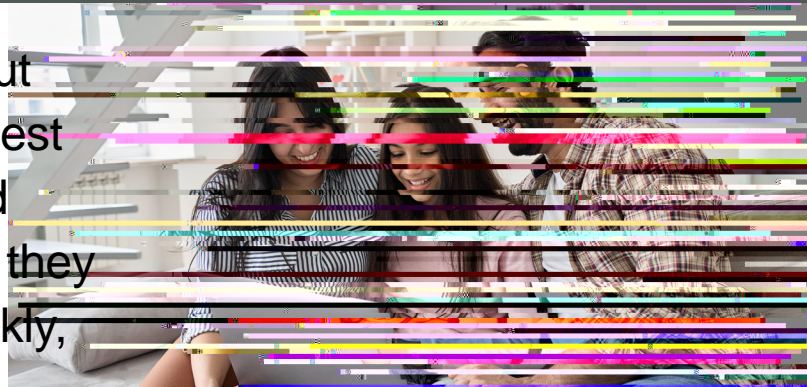# Meningococcal Disease Outbreaks: Information for Teens, Young Adults, and Their Parents

Meningococcal disease is a rare, but very serious bacterial illness. The best way to protect yourself or your child during an outbreak is to make sure they get vaccinated. Even if treated quickly, meningococcal disease can cause long-term problems or be deadly.

Outbreaks are rare and unpredictable

Outbreaks can occur in many settings, including

- Communities
- Schools and colleges
- Detention and correctional facilities
- Other populations

Since meningococcal disease is rare, just two cases in a setting over a few months might be considered an outbreak.

State and local health departments investigate outbreaks and determine

- Who is at increased risk during an outbreak
- How to best protect people's health and control the outbreak

Certain people are at increased risk

Anyone can get meningococcal disease, no matter their gender, age, race, ethnicity, or sexual orientation. However, being in an outbreak setting can increase someone's risk of getting meningococcal disease.

In addition, people of some ages have a higher risk than people of other ages:

- Babies
- Teens and young adults (16 to 23 year olds)
- Adults 65 years or older

Having certain medical conditions, going to college, or traveling to certain countries can increase someone's risk for getting this disease.

Vaccines, antibiotics offer protection during outbreaks

State and local health departments make sure all close contacts of someone with meningococcal disease get antibiotics. They may also recommend people at increased risk get vaccinated.

There are two types of vaccines that help protect against meningococcal disease: MenACWY and MenB vaccines. Each vaccine protects against different serotypes (strains), so it's important that the recommended vaccine matches the strain causing the outbreak.

Contact your state or local health department to learn about their vaccine recommendations during an outbrea k.

Vaccine side effects are usually mild

Meningococcal vaccines are safe. Most people who get a meningococcal vaccine do not have any serious problems with it. Side effects are usually mild and go away on their own within a few days. Serious reactions are possible, but rare.

Meningococcal bacteria are spread from person to person

People spread the bacteria that cause meningococcal disease to others through respiratory droplets and throat secretions (saliva or spit). Generally, it takes close (kissing) or lengthy (living together) contact to spread them.

Meningitis and bloodstream infection are common outcomes

With meningococcal meningitis, the lining of the brain and spinal cord becomes infected and swells. Symptoms include sudden onset of fever, headache, and stiff neck. There can be additional symptoms, such as

- Nausea and vomiting

- Eyes being more sensitive to light

- Confusion

In babies, these symptoms can be difficult to notice or may not be there at all. Instead, a baby may appear slow or inactive, be irritable, vomit, or feed poorly.

With a meningococcal bloodstream infection, the bacteria damage the walls of the blood vessels and cause bleeding into the skin and organs. Symptoms may include:

- Fever and chills

- Feeling tired

- Vomiting or diarrhea

- Cold hands and feet

- Severe aches or pain in the muscles, joints, chest, or belly

- Rapid breathing

- A dark purple rash

Seek medical care right away if you or your child has symptoms of meningococcal disease.

Meningococcal disease is very serious but treatable

Meningococcal disease can be treated with antibiotics. It's important that treatment be started as soon as possible. Meningococcal disease can be deadly in a matter of hours.

Vaccines are the best way to prevent meningococcal disease

Even when there isn't an outbreak, CDC recommends preteens, teens, and others get vaccinated.

Preteens, teens, and young adults

Preteens should get 1 dose of MenACWY vaccine at 11 or 12 years old. Teens should get a MenACWY booster dose at 16Tj ET EMC /P <</Lang (en-l11.9615 6y in a matter of hou

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