

Meningococcal Vaccine School Requirement

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As of September 1, 2016, all public and private school students entering 7th and 12th grades in New York State must be fully vaccinated against [meningococcal disease](#) in order to attend school.

The meningococcal vaccine protects against serious and sometimes deadly diseases such as meningitis (an infection of the lining of the brain and spinal cord) and sepsis (blood infections). That's why the vaccine is sometimes called the meningitis vaccine.

The vaccine is administered as a shot.

Before school this September:

- **One dose of meningococcal vaccine is required before 7th grade.** If your child had the first dose as a sixth grader, then another dose is not required until 12th grade.
- **A total of two doses will be required before 12th grade.** Most students entering 12th grade got their first dose when they were younger and are now due for their second dose, or booster. This booster is needed because protection from the vaccine decreases over time.
- The **only** teens who will not need a second dose before 12th grade are those who got their first dose on or after their 16th birthday.

It's best to check with your doctor to see whether or not your child needs the vaccine. Students who are not up-to-date will not be allowed to attend school until they are vaccinated.

What is Meningococcal Disease?

Meningococcal disease is a rare but dangerous disease that strikes healthy young people without warning. It can cause meningitis and sepsis. Meningococcal infections can be treated with antibiotics. But, even with treatment, about 10 to 15% of people who get sick will die. Another 10 to 20% will survive but suffer lifelong disabilities such as hearing loss, loss of arms or legs, or brain damage.

Why is the Vaccine Required?

The meningococcal vaccine is the best protection from this very serious disease. It can affect all ages, but teens and young adults are at highest risk of getting the disease.

Meningococcal disease spreads easily in large groups and in dormitory-like settings. An infected person can spread the disease by coughing or sneezing directly into the face of others, by kissing a person on the mouth, or by sharing a glass or cup. That's why it is so important to make sure teens and young adults get vaccinated when they are most at risk.

The meningococcal vaccine has been recommended by many health care providers for more than a decade. It is a school requirement in more than 20 states and many colleges currently require incoming students to have the vaccine.

Which vaccine does my preteen or teen need?

The meningococcal conjugate vaccine* is the preferred vaccine for preteens and teens. It helps protect them from the four most common types (types A, C, W and Y) of meningococcal disease in the U.S. **This is the vaccine they will need in order to satisfy the school requirement before September.**

Another meningococcal vaccine is also available for teens. It is the Serogroup B meningococcal vaccine.** **This vaccine is not required for school entry and cannot be used to fulfill the school entrance requirement.** It helps protect against a different type of meningococcal disease, and it can be given to teens and young adults between the ages of 16 and 23 years. It can also be given to people 10 and older who have certain medical conditions. It may be given at the same time as the meningococcal conjugate vaccine, but preferably in different arms.

Talk to your health care provider if you have any questions about insurance coverage for this vaccine.

- *(Also known as MenACWY or MCV4 vaccine, with the brand names Menactra and Menveo.)
- ** (Also known as MenB vaccine, with the brand names Bexsero and Trumenba).

Are the vaccines safe and effective?

Meningococcal vaccines are safe and they are 85 to 100% effective. However, they may cause mild and infrequent side effects, such as redness and pain at the injection site lasting up to two days.

What are the side effects of the vaccines?

As with any vaccine, the meningococcal vaccine may cause minor reactions. The most common reactions are headache, and pain and redness at the injection site. A small percentage of people who get the vaccine develop a fever. It is not unusual for some preteens and teens to faint after getting this vaccine, or after any other shot. To avoid fainting, the child should sit or lie down to get the shot, and remain lying down for about 15 minutes afterward.

Serious allergic reactions are very rare.

Who should not be vaccinated?

Some people should not get meningococcal vaccine or they should wait.

- *Tell your doctor if you have any severe allergies.* Anyone who has ever had a severe allergic reaction to a previous dose of vaccine for meningococcal disease should not get another dose of either vaccine.
- Anyone who has a severe allergy to any vaccine component should not get the vaccine.
- Anyone who is moderately or severely ill at the time the shot is scheduled should probably wait until they recover. Ask your doctor. People with a mild illness can usually get the vaccine.

Will my child be required to get this vaccine even if they have a medical or religious exemption to immunization?

New York State law allows for medical and religious exemptions to school immunization requirements, including the meningococcal vaccine requirement.

How can I pay for the vaccine?

All private insurance plans regulated by New York State are required to cover the cost of all vaccines recommended by the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP), for patients through age 18. This includes meningococcal vaccine. All other private insurance plans should be contacted individually to determine their coverage of meningococcal vaccination.

A federal program called the Vaccines for Children (VFC) Program can help pay for your child's vaccines if he or she is 18 or younger and not insured – or, if he or she is underinsured, eligible for Medicaid, an American Indian or an Alaska Native. For more information, visit New York State Vaccines for Children Program.

Contact Information:

- For questions about the meningococcal vaccine requirement, please contact the New York State Department of Health Bureau of Immunization's School Assessment and Compliance Unit at 518-474-1944 or by email at OSAS@health.ny.gov
- New York City schools should direct questions and requests for information to the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene at 347-396-2433.

Additional Resources

- [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)
- [Meningococcal ACIP Vaccine Recommendations](#)