

MenACWY vaccine

The MenACWY vaccine helps protect against life-threatening illnesses like meningitis and sepsis. It's offered to teenagers in school, but can be given up to the age of 25 if it's been missed.

What the MenACWY vaccine is for

Meningitis, sepsis and septicaemia (blood poisoning) are very serious, potentially life-threatening illnesses that can lead to life-changing disabilities, such as amputations, hearing loss and brain damage.

Anyone can get meningitis but it's most common in babies, children, teenagers and young adults.

Babies are given the MenB vaccine to help protect against a common type of bacteria that causes meningitis.

The MenACWY vaccine is given to teenagers and helps protect against 4 other types of bacteria linked to meningitis.

Although the vaccine is very effective, it does not prevent all types of meningitis, so it's still important to be aware of the symptoms of meningitis even if you've been vaccinated.

Who should have the MenACWY vaccine

The MenACWY vaccine is recommended for all teenagers. It's usually given to children when they're 13 or 14 years old (school year 9).

If you missed having the vaccine when you were at school, you can get it up to the age of 25 years.

It's also available for some people who are at increased risk of getting meningitis because of:

- a medical condition
- work
- travel
- close contact with someone who's infected

Students

Meningitis can spread very quickly in places like universities and colleges.

Make sure all your vaccinations are up to date before starting university or college, including the MenACWY vaccine and both doses of the MMR vaccine.

Check your travel risk

You can check the risks of a country you're travelling to on the [TravelHealthPro](#) website

Who cannot have the MenACWY vaccine

Most people can have the MenACWY vaccine.

The vaccine should not be given to those who have had:

- a serious allergic reaction (anaphylaxis) to a previous dose of the vaccine
- a serious allergic reaction to any ingredient in the MenACWY vaccine

Getting vaccinated if you're unwell

You can have the MenACWY vaccine if you're unwell but do not have a high temperature.

If you have a high temperature, wait until you're feeling better before having the vaccine.

MenACWY vaccine ingredients

There is 1 type of MenACWY vaccine available in the UK. You can check the ingredients in the patient leaflet:

MenQuadfi vaccine patient leaflet (Electronic Medicines Compendium website; PDF only, 124KB)

How to get the MenACWY vaccine

Teenagers are usually given the MenACWY vaccine at school when they're 13 or 14 years old (school year 9).

If you missed having the vaccine when you were at school, you can still get it up until the age of 25. Ask your GP about getting vaccinated.

College and university students

If you're under 25 and you've not had the MenACWY vaccine before, you should ideally have it at least 2 weeks before starting college or university. Ask a GP about getting vaccinated.

If you've already started college or university, get the vaccine as soon as possible. Ask at the health centre on campus or register with a GP to get it.

How the MenACWY vaccine is given

The MenACWY vaccine is given as an injection, usually in the upper arm.

Most people only need 1 dose of the vaccine.

But if you need it because of your job, you may need a booster dose every 5 years.

Having the MenACWY vaccine at the same time as other vaccines

The MenACWY vaccine can be given at the same time as other vaccines, including the MMR and Td/IPV (3-in-1 teenage booster) vaccines.

Side effects of the MenACWY vaccine

Most side effects of the MenACWY vaccine are mild and do not last long.

Common side effects include:

- a reaction where the injection was given, such as pain, swelling or itchiness

- headache
- feeling sick (nausea)
- a rash
- feeling irritable
- feeling drowsy
- loss of appetite
- generally feeling unwell

More serious side effects, such as a severe allergic reaction are very rare. The person who vaccinates you will be trained to deal with allergic reactions and treat them immediately.

The MenACWY vaccines used in the UK do not contain live bacteria, so there's no risk of getting the infections from the vaccine.