

## What is meningococcal disease?

Meningococcal disease is caused by infection with a bacteria (germ) called *Neisseria meningitidis*. This infection can cause meningitis (an infection in the lining of the brain or spinal cord,) or septicemia (infection of the blood and organs) which could result in permanent brain damage, organ failure and even death.

## How is meningococcal disease spread?

Meningococcal disease is spread from an infected person by the respiratory route which includes kissing, coughing, sneezing, sharing items such as water bottles or from handling soiled items such as tissues. It may also be spread when living in close quarters with an infected person.

## Why do we recommend vaccination for meningococcal disease?

Immunization and clean, cover and contain practices are the best methods of prevention. Community/public health nurses will offer the meningococcal vaccine to all children **12 months of age** (Men-C-C) and all students in **grade four** (Men- C-ACYW135) as part of the provincial publicly funded immunization program.

- Men-C-C provides protection against 1 type of meningococcal disease, type C.
- Men-C-ACYW135 provides protection against 4 types of meningococcal disease A, C, Y, and W-135

## Is the meningococcal vaccine safe?

All vaccines recommended by the National Advisory Committee on Immunization and the Provincial Department of Health and Community Services, such as this one, are safe and effective.

## What are the vaccine's common side effects?

Side effects are generally mild and usually last a day or two. Some side effects may include a sore arm (redness, tender, swollen) at the site of the injection, headache, fatigue or fever. Serious side effects are rare and should be reported to the community/public health nurse.

## Is this vaccine mandatory?

No, but it is highly recommended for protection against a preventable disease. Informed written consent is required before administration of this vaccine.

For additional information and services contact the Regional Health Authority in your community.