

MenACWY vaccine: key information

What is meningitis?

- Meningitis is an inflammation of the meninges - the lining of the brain and spinal cord. It's most commonly caused by bacterial, viral or fungal infections. Symptoms can develop quickly, causing a rapid deterioration to a person's health. It can be fatal within 24 hours.
- Severe cases of meningitis are most often caused by bacterial infection.



What is the MenACWY vaccine?

- MenACWY vaccine offers protection against four strains of meningitis caused by meningococcal bacteria (A, C, W & Y).
- It was introduced in the UK in 2015 to protect teenagers against a harmful strain of MenW which had rapidly rising cases since 2009. It was introduced in Ireland in 2019.

Why do I need the MenACWY vaccine?

- It is particularly important to protect teenagers and young adults because, as well as being at increased risk of developing the disease, they are also the most likely to carry and spread the bacteria to others.

Is the MenACWY vaccine safe?

- The MenACWY vaccine is a safe and very effective vaccine.
- As with all drugs, vaccines can cause side effects. Side effects of MenACWY vaccines are similar to other routine vaccines and may include soreness / redness / swelling or hardness of skin at the injection site, fever, headache, nausea, muscle aches, tiredness / fatigue, loss of appetite, generally feeling unwell.

When is the MenACWY vaccine given?

- In England and Wales it is usually offered to teenagers in school year 9.
- In Scotland it is usually offered in school year S3.
- In Ireland it is usually offered in the first year of secondary school.



Meningitis Research Foundation is a registered charity (number 1091105).

MenACWY vaccine: how to get it

How do I find out if I've had the MenACWY vaccine?

There are a few ways to find out if you've had the MenACWY vaccine:

- Ask your GP – they should have a record of any vaccines you've had.
- Ask your school – they can advise if the vaccination program happened at your school in the year you were there.
- Ask a parent/carer – they may remember if you've had the vaccine at school.



What do I do if I haven't had the MenACWY vaccine?

Young people from England, Wales and Northern Ireland:

- If you are over 14, and did not get this vaccine at school or from your GP, you can still get the vaccine until you reach 25.
- Young adults who have left school and missed out should speak to their GP.

Young people from Scotland:

- Young people of school age who missed out on getting their vaccine can speak to their school or GP and ask about how to access the vaccine.
- If you have never had a MenC containing vaccine, you are eligible to receive MenACWY until you reach 25.
- If you are attending university or college for the first time, you are under 25 and you haven't previously had the MenACWY vaccine, you can get the vaccine free of charge.

All students:

- Ideally, first-year students should arrange to get the MenACWY vaccine from their GP at least two weeks before they go away to study to make sure that they are protected by the time they get to university.
- Any eligible first-year students not immunised before they started should get the vaccine as soon as possible by registering with their university health centre or other GP practice.

Got questions? Need information? Contact Meningitis Research Foundation:

Call: 0808 800 3344 (UK) or 1800 41 33 44 (Republic of Ireland),

Monday - Friday, 9am - 5pm

Email: helpline@meningitis.org

Live Chat: www.meningitis.org, Monday - Friday, 10am - 4pm