



National Institute for Public Health
and the Environment
Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport

Get that jab against *meningococcal disease*





Meningococcal disease

You received an invitation to get a vaccination that will protect you against meningococcal disease. The vaccination is being offered because type W meningococcal bacteria is currently making more and more people ill. Getting this injection will prevent you from becoming ill or infecting other people.

Some bacteria and viruses can make you very ill – and the meningococcal bacteria is one of these. The bacteria can be present in your nose or mouth without you even noticing. In most cases, they do not spread beyond that area, so they fortunately will not make you ill. Your body usually gets rid of the bacteria on its own within a few months.

How does the bacteria get into your body?

The meningococcal bacteria spreads through the air, lodging in your nose or throat. Coughing, sneezing or kissing can spread the infection. In places where people sit close together, it is easy for them to infect each other. If you do become ill, the illness will usually show up within a few days after being infected.

*“i do not wish
what happened
to our family on
anyone else.”*



Sterre (17 years old) lost her sister to the meningococcal bacteria

Sterre is the middle sister of three. On 2 December 2017, her older sister came home. She was a first-year architecture student in Delft. The family had a nice evening. No sign of anything wrong. Three days later, she had passed away. Talented, smart and motivated, Amber died of meningitis, an inflammation of the membranes that surround the brain and spinal cord which is caused by the meningococcal bacteria. Despite her recent grief, Sterre took the initiative to tell her story. Her message is clear: Just do it. Get the vaccination.

Watch her story on deeditnietmetjevrienden.nl/sterre

How dangerous is meningococcal disease?

In the first few hours, meningococcal disease may look like flu or an upset stomach. An important difference: meningococcal disease can make you seriously ill within a very short space of time. Meningococcal bacteria can cause you to develop meningitis or blood poisoning. These are very serious illnesses.

Meningitis can leave you with permanent brain damage. For example, your memory may be affected, or you could lose your hearing. Blood poisoning can severely damage your blood vessels, making it necessary to amputate a foot, hand, arm or leg. People sometimes become so ill from the bacterial infection that they die. Fortunately, there is a minimal risk that you will become ill due to meningococcal bacteria.

A jab to prevent meningococcal disease

You can get an injection that protects you against meningococcal disease. You were probably vaccinated against meningococcal disease when you were 14 months old. That vaccination was to protect you from type C meningococcal bacteria.

There are many different types of meningococcal bacteria. Right now, type W meningococcal bacteria is causing more people to become ill. That is why you are being offered a new vaccination now. This shot protects you against four types of meningococcal bacteria, including type W.

The new vaccination will protect you for at least 5 years. The vaccine that you are being offered now has been used for many years to vaccinate people who travel to countries where the disease is more common.

“If I had been able to choose, I would not have wanted to go through this.”



Felice (25 years old) had a meningococcal bacterial infection as a baby

Felice was only an infant when her mother discovered tiny dark spots on her torso. Her grandmother was visiting and did not trust the symptom, so they rushed the baby to the hospital. As a 16-month-old infant, she was gravely ill, and turned out to have blood poisoning. To save her life, the doctors had to amputate both her legs. Felice is an adult now and has had countless operations over the years. She has a job and a boyfriend and leads an ordinary life as much as possible.

Watch her story on deeditnietmetjevrienden.nl/felice

How does the vaccination work?

The vaccine in the injection contains specific pieces of the bacteria. These specific pieces cannot make you ill. These key parts of the disease germ do make sure that your immune system will be able to recognise the meningococcal bacteria. If you do develop a meningococcal infection after being vaccinated, your immune system will kill the bacteria, so you will not become ill. You will get the jab in your upper arm. The injection site may become slightly red or feel a bit hard. This response disappears after a day. Some people develop a slight headache or mild fever, but this is nothing to worry about. On the day you get vaccinated, you can go to school or play sports as usual.

Why are you getting the vaccination?

You may be wondering why you are being offered this vaccination now. Research shows that you are more likely to have the meningococcal bacteria in your nose or throat after you reach the age of 14. Also, the bacteria spreads easily between young people between the ages of 14 and 20. In 2018, most of the young people who turned 14 years old in that year received an invitation to get the shot. In 2019, all young people born between 1 January 2001 and 1 May 2004 will be offered the vaccination. You will also receive an invitation if you were born in 2005. By protecting more young people against the meningococcal bacteria, it will be much more difficult for the bacteria to spread, so far fewer people will fall ill.

Would you like to report a side effect of the vaccination?

As stated, there is a small chance that the injection site may become a bit red or hard. People may sometimes develop a mild fever or slight headache after the injection. You will not usually notice anything from the jab. If you do experience any discomfort after getting vaccinated, and think it may be caused by the injection, you can report it to the Netherlands Pharmacovigilance Centre Lareb. This institute tracks and investigates all side effects. More information about Lareb is available on the website about the vaccination against meningococcal disease. That site also includes the patient information leaflet for the vaccine.

Get that jab against meningococcal disease

- Meningococcal disease is serious.
- If you have the bacteria, you can infect other people by sneezing, coughing or kissing, even if you do not feel ill yourself.
- You will receive an invitation for the vaccination in the post.
- Only vaccination can prevent you from becoming ill.
- The jab can also help you avoid infecting others.



1 jab in your upper arm

The bacteria can be present in your nose or mouth



Protect yourself and others



Do not share it with your friends

We know you want to share absolutely everything with your friends, but you should not share this bacterial infection. If you get that jab against meningococcal disease, you will not become ill yourself, and you will not be able to infect your friends either. If more young people get the jab, it reduces the risk of infection and keeps more people from becoming ill. A jab to prevent meningococcal disease protects you and others.

Deelditnietmetjevrienden.nl

Visit the website deelditnietmetjevrienden.nl and allow Jan Versteegh to guide you through the lives of young people, each with their own story about meningococcal disease. You can also read stories told by parents and find out more about the illness and the jab. The site also offers answers to questions you might have and shows you where to chat with a doctor if you have a medical question.



“The meningococcus is an incredible nasty creature!””

Frans sees his daughter have a narrow escape

One afternoon, Frans’ daughter is not feeling well. That night, she develops a high fever. When she goes to the GP the next morning, the doctor suspects blood poisoning and sends them to the local hospital. From there, the family is sent straight on to the university hospital. When Frans recalls that trip in the car, following the ambulance, his emotions show clearly. Total uncertainty. The fear of losing your child.

Watch the story of Frans and his daughter on deeditnietmetjevrienden.nl/frans

Information about the vaccination

When you get the jab, the youth healthcare services register your vaccination in three different places: in the records maintained by the youth healthcare services, on your vaccination certificate, and in the national records maintained by the National Institute for Public Health and the Environment (RIVM).

RIVM uses your information for various purposes. First, RIVM wants to know how many people are vaccinated. In addition, RIVM will send you a reminder if you have not received a vaccination.

Finally, the records are used to provide you with a copy of your vaccination certificate when you request it – convenient if you are going on a trip and want to know what diseases you are vaccinated against.



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