

# Meningococcal Vaccines

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This sheet is about exposure to meningococcal vaccines in pregnancy and while breastfeeding. This information should not take the place of medical care and advice from your healthcare provider.

## *What is meningococcal disease?*

Meningococcal disease is any illness caused by bacteria called *Neisseria meningitidis*. It can cause meningitis (infection of the brain and spinal cord) and meningococemia (infections of the blood). Symptoms of meningococcal disease can include a sudden onset of headache, fever, and stiff neck. A person may also seem confused, have increased sensitivity to light, or develop a rash. If you think you have a meningococcal disease, it is important to get appropriate care as soon as possible.

Several types of bacteria can cause meningitis, such as *Neisseria meningitidis*, *Streptococcus pneumoniae*, Group B *Streptococcus*, *Haemophilus influenzae*, *Listeria monocytogenes*, and *Escherichia coli*. While bacterial meningitis is not as contagious as a cold or the flu, it can be passed through contact with a sick person's saliva or spit (such as through coughing or kissing). Factors such where people work, live, and travel can increase the chance for meningococcal disease. For example, people who live together in groups (such as people in the military or students who live in a dormitory setting) are at increased risk.

## *What are the meningococcal vaccines?*

Meningococcal vaccines provide protection against some of the meningococcal bacteria that cause disease. There is meningococcal conjugate or MenACWY vaccines (Menactra®, Menveo®, and MenQuadfi®) and serogroup B meningococcal or MenB vaccines (Bexsero® and Trumenba®), which are available in the United States. These vaccines do not contain live bacteria that could cause meningococcal disease.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) states that people who are pregnant and who are at increased risk for serogroup A, C, W, or Y meningococcal disease may get MenACWY vaccines.

The CDC states that MenB vaccines should be postponed in people known to be pregnant unless they are at increased risk for serogroup B meningococcal disease. Your healthcare providers can talk with you about your risk for meningococcal disease and the benefits of getting a vaccine.

## *I just got a meningococcal vaccine. How long should I wait until I get pregnant?*

The meningococcal vaccines do not contain live bacteria that could cause meningococcal disease. There is no recommended waiting time before trying to get pregnant.

## *I received a meningococcal vaccine. Can it make it harder for me to get pregnant?*

Based on the studies reviewed, there is no information to suggest that receiving a meningococcal vaccine can make it harder to get pregnant.

## *Does getting a meningococcal vaccine increase the chance for miscarriage?*

Miscarriage is common and can occur in any pregnancy for many different reasons. While the data are limited, reviews of reports of vaccination during pregnancy do not suggest an increased chance of miscarriage with meningococcal vaccines.

## *Does getting a meningococcal vaccine increase the chance of birth defects?*

Every pregnancy starts out with a 3-5% chance of having a birth defect. This is called the background risk. Available information does not suggest that getting a meningococcal vaccine during pregnancy increases the chance of birth defects above the background risk.

## *Does getting the meningococcal vaccine increase the chance of other pregnancy-related problems?*

One study did not find differences in pregnancy outcomes such as preterm delivery (birth before week 37), low birth weight (weighing less than 5 pounds, 8 ounces [2500 grams] at birth), being small for gestational age (smaller in size

than usual), C-sections, or stillbirth between those who were vaccinated with MenA conjugate vaccine and those who were not vaccinated.

Studies have not been done to see if MenB vaccines increase the chance of pregnancy-related problems.

*Does getting a meningococcal vaccine in pregnancy affect future behavior or learning for the child?*

Studies have not been done to see if getting a meningococcal vaccine can cause behavior or learning issues for the child.

*There is an outbreak of meningococcal disease in my area. Should I get vaccinated even though I am pregnant?*

Meningococcal disease is a very serious condition. If someone is at risk to get the disease it is recommended that they get the vaccine, whether or not they are pregnant. Talk with your healthcare provider about your risk of meningococcal disease and getting a meningococcal vaccine.

*Breastfeeding and the meningococcal vaccines:*

The CDC and other professional health organizations state that vaccines given to a nursing mother do not affect the safety of breastfeeding for mothers or infants.

The CDC states that MenB vaccines should be postponed in people known to be breastfeeding unless they are at increased risk for serogroup B meningococcal disease. Your healthcare providers can talk with you about your risk for meningococcal disease and the benefits of vaccination. Be sure to talk to your healthcare provider about all your breastfeeding questions.

*If a male gets a meningococcal vaccine, could it affect fertility (ability to get partner pregnant) or increase the chance of birth defects?*

Studies have not been done to see if meningococcal vaccines could affect male fertility or increase the chance of birth defects above the background risk. In general, exposures that fathers or sperm donors have are unlikely to increase risks to a pregnancy. For more information, please see the MotherToBaby fact sheet Paternal Exposures at <https://mothertobaby.org/fact-sheets/paternal-exposures-pregnancy/>.

**Please click here for references.**

**Questions? Call 866.626.6847 | Text 855.999.3525 | Email or Chat at [MotherToBaby.org](https://mothertobaby.org).**

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