

## **MENOMUNE VACCINE**

### **ABOUT THE DISEASE**

Meningitis is a life-threatening disease. There are two kinds of meningitis, viral and bacterial. Viral meningitis cases are not very long in duration and are unaffected by antibiotics. Viral meningitis usually occurs in late summer and early fall. The symptoms can include abdominal discomfort, headache, chest pain, or a rash. More serious symptoms include altered consciousness or paralysis. Bacterial meningitis is more serious. Bacterial meningitis can be treated with antibiotics. It usually occurs in late winter to early spring. Meningococcal meningitis is a form of bacterial meningitis and can be fatal if left untreated. The symptoms include fever greater than 101F, severe sudden headache, mental changes, neck or back stiffness, and a red or purplish-black rash. The rashes usually appear on 3/4 of the patients and can be found in the groin, armpits, ankles, or wherever pressure is applied.

### **HOW MENINGITIS IS SPREAD**

Approximately 10% of the general population carry the meningococcal bacteria in the nose and throat in a harmless state. Yet, the percentage of people who develop meningococcal disease is less than 1%. The meningococcal bacteria usually cannot live outside the body for more than a few minutes. As a result, the bacteria is not easily transmitted by routine contact with an infected person in a classroom, dining room, bar, rest room, etc. Roommates, friends, spouses, and children who have had intimate contact with the oral secretions of a person diagnosed with meningococcal disease are at risk for contracting the disease and should receive prophylactic medication immediately. Examples of such contact include kissing, sharing eating utensils or drinking cups, and being exposed to droplet contamination from the nose or throat.

### **WHO SHOULD GET THE MENOMUNE VACCINE**

The American College Health Association is now recommending that all college students should consider getting the vaccination against the meningococcal disease. They should receive the vaccine before an outbreak occurs. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that adults under 30 years of age have the vaccination. The name of the vaccine is Menomune. The vaccine provides protection against serogroups A, C, Y, and W-135, the most common strains of the disease. It is a one time injection. Protection from this vaccine begins 10-14 days after immunization and lasts approximately 3 years. The vaccine can be administered at the same time as other vaccines as long as they are in different anatomic sites.

## **SOME PEOPLE SHOULD NOT GET THE MENINGITIS VACCINE**

People should not get the vaccine if they have had a life threatening allergic reaction to a previous injection. It should not be given if you are allergic to thimersol, a substance found in several vaccines. People should not receive the vaccine if an acute illness with a fever of 101F or higher is present. Pregnant women should not be immunized without her obstetrician's permission, since the side effects of the vaccine on the fetus are unknown.

## **WHAT ARE THE RISKS FROM MENOMUNE**

Some people receiving the Menomune vaccine experience some degree of local and systemic response that usually begins within in 24 hours and lasts 2 or 3 days.

### **Mild Problems**

- erythema, induration, and tenderness at the injection site (redness and swelling)
- a transient fever
- malaise (general discomfort)
- myalgia (sore muscles)

### **Severe Problems**

- serious allergic reactions (see below)

## **WHAT IF THERE IS A MODERATE OR SEVERE REACTION**

Signs of a serious allergic reaction can include difficulty breathing, hoarseness, or wheezing, hives, paleness, weakness, and a fast or irregular heart beat. If such a reaction were to occur, it would be within a few minutes to a few hours after the shot. If this should occur, get the person to a doctor or the emergency room right away. Tell the doctor what happened, the date and the time it happened, and when the vaccine was given.

## **HOW CAN I LEARN MORE**

Ask your doctor or nurse. They should be able to suggest other sources of information. The local or state health departments are other resources. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has a website that has information that you can access at:  
<http://www.cdc.gov/epo/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/00046263.htm>

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