

Hepatitis B and Meningococcal Vaccination Programs for Grade 7 Students

The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care provides **Hepatitis B vaccine** and **Menactra® vaccine** free to all Grade 7 students in Ontario.

Important points:

- Your child's participation is **voluntary**. Although no vaccine is 100 per cent effective, getting vaccinated is the best way to gain protection against these serious diseases.
- Choosing not to get vaccinated increases your risk of disease. Without vaccination, it is recommended that you understand how each disease is spread and take the appropriate measures to help reduce your child's risk. Many different careers, school programs, and workplaces require proof of these immunizations.
- School-based immunization clinics are held in the Fall and Spring. If you would like to have your child vaccinated at a Public Health Clinic or at their family doctor's office, please call and speak to a nurse.
- Hepatitis B vaccine for Grade 7 students is a two-dose series. The first dose is given in the Fall and the second dose is given in the Spring. Both doses must be received in order to be protected. If your child has previously received Hepatitis B vaccine or Twinrix® vaccine (a combined Hepatitis A/Hepatitis B vaccine), record this information on the consent form.
- Menactra® is a conjugated vaccine which provides long-term protection against four types of meningitis (A, C, Y and W-135). If your child has received Menactra® already, they will not need it again. If your child has previously received the meningococcal C conjugate vaccine, it is highly recommended they still participate in the Grade 7 Menactra® program, to provide them with a 'boost of C' and broader protection against A, Y and W-135.
- It is very important that Public Health has information about your child's past vaccinations for Hepatitis B and meningococcal disease, in order to determine if participation in the Grade 7 vaccination program is appropriate. **If you are unsure of your child's vaccination history, check with your doctor.**
- The nurse will provide a record of vaccination to your child. Keep this information with your child's Immunization Record (yellow card).
- If your child receives their Hepatitis B/Meningococcal vaccinations at the doctor's office or walk-in clinic, you must report the date(s) the vaccine(s) was received to Public Health through one of the following ways:
 - WEBSITE: www.niagararegion.ca
 - TELEPHONE (Immunization Report Line): 905-688-8248 or 1-888-505-6074 ext.7459
 - FAX (a copy of your child's Immunization Record): 905-688-8225

Frequently Asked Questions

What is Hepatitis B Disease?

- It is an infection of the liver caused by the Hepatitis B virus. It can permanently damage the liver.
- The liver is needed to digest food and remove water and toxins from the body.
- The disease can cause tiredness, fever, loss of appetite, and sometimes jaundice (yellow skin and eyes).
- Most people get well, but about 10% can carry the virus for life and keep infecting other people. Some people will continue to have liver problems for the rest of their lives. Serious liver disease can lead to liver cancer and death.

How is Hepatitis B Disease spread?

- Blood and body fluids of an infected person, usually by unprotected sexual contact.
- Sharing used needles, body/ear piercing or tattooing with infected equipment.
- An infected mother can spread the infection to her child at birth.

What is Meningococcal Disease?

- It is a serious bacterial infection caused by *Neisseria meningitidis*. It can cause an infection in the bloodstream and/or the lining covering the brain and spinal cord.
- There are many types (serogroups) of this bacteria. Outbreaks have been mostly due to serogroup C, although types Y and W-135 are becoming more common in Canada.
- The earliest signs are fever, drowsiness, reduced consciousness and irritability. Other signs include severe headache, vomiting, stiffness, and neck pain. In many cases, red spots appear on the skin and do not disappear when pressed.
- One in 20 cases will result in death, even with treatment. One in 20 who survive, will have brain damage.

How is Meningococcal Disease spread?

- The bacteria are common and can live in the back of the nose and throat, without making a person sick.
- It is spread from an infected person to others through direct contact such as kissing, coughing and sneezing.
- It can also be spread through saliva (spit) when sharing items such as cigarettes, lipstick, food or drinks, cups, water bottles, cans, drinking straws, toothbrushes, toys, mouth guards and musical instruments with mouthpieces.

Who should NOT receive Hepatitis B and Menactra® vaccines?

- Individuals with an infection or high fever (vaccination should be delayed until feeling better).
- Individuals who are allergic to any part of the vaccine or have had a bad reaction to vaccines before.
- Pregnant or breastfeeding women. Speak to your doctor.

What are the side effects of these vaccines?

- As with any vaccination, side effects can occur. The most common side effects are headache, redness, swelling and pain at the injection site, tiredness, and low grade fever. Serious side effects are rare, but if difficulty breathing, hives, or swelling of the throat occurs, go to the nearest emergency room.

Sources:

Canadian Immunization Guide, 7th Edition , 2006.

Engerix B Product Monograph, GlaxoSmithKline Inc., September 23, 2008.

Menactra® Product Monograph, Sanofi Pasteur Limited, September 2008.

Recombivax HB Product Monograph, Merck Frosst Canada Limited, March 23, 2009.