



Protecting your baby against meningitis and septicaemia

caused by meningococcal B bacteria

MenB vaccine now available!

**Information about the MenB vaccine
and recommended paracetamol use**

Protecting your baby against MenB disease

There's now a vaccine to help protect against meningococcal group B (MenB) disease. The vaccine is being offered in the routine immunisation programme in the UK.

This leaflet includes information about the MenB vaccine and the disease that it will help protect against. It also includes information about the use of paracetamol after vaccination.

What is MenB disease?

MenB disease is a serious illness caused by group B strains of meningococcal bacteria. These bacteria are a major cause of **meningitis** (inflammation of the lining of the brain and spinal cord) and **septicaemia** (blood poisoning) in young children and teenagers.

We fear these diseases because they:

- can come on suddenly
- can progress very quickly
- can kill in hours
- can leave survivors with life-long disabilities.

What are the symptoms of meningitis and septicaemia?

The symptoms and signs of meningitis and septicaemia can include:

- refusing feeds, vomiting
- feeling drowsy and not responding to you, or being difficult to wake
- being floppy and having no energy, or being stiff with jerky movements
- being irritable when picked up
- a high-pitched moaning cry
- grunting
- rapid or unusual patterns of breathing
- fever (high temperature)
- cold hands and/or feet
- skin that is pale, blotchy or turning blue
- shivering
- spots or a rash that does not fade under pressure
- convulsions/seizures
- a bulging fontanelle (the soft patch on the top of the baby's head)
- a stiff neck
- disliking bright lights

The typical rash of meningococcal septicaemia usually starts as small pinpricks, but as the disease progresses deep purple blotches that do not fade under pressure can appear. Not all children get this rash, so you should not wait for this before seeking help.

Symptoms can occur in any order and some may not appear at all – trust your instincts.

How many different strains of meningococcal bacteria are there?

There are many different strains, but MenB is responsible for most cases of meningococcal disease in young children and teenagers in this country. MenC disease is now rare because babies, children and teenagers are routinely vaccinated against MenC in the UK.

How are meningococcal bacteria spread?

The bacteria live in the throats of about 10% of healthy people. They do not spread easily but may be passed on through close prolonged contact, for example within families, probably by coughing, sneezing or kissing.

How common is MenB disease?

Meningococcal disease occurs in cycles, with between 500 and 1,700 children and adults in England developing MenB disease every year. Around half of these cases occur in children under five years of age, with infants at highest risk. Without vaccination hundreds of young children will get meningococcal disease every year.

Can MenB disease be treated?

Meningitis and septicaemia need **urgent** admission to hospital and rapid treatment with antibiotics. If treatment is started quickly, then it is much less likely to be life-threatening or cause permanent disability. If you think your baby or child has symptoms of meningitis or septicaemia you should trust your instincts and get urgent medical advice.

MenB vaccine

Why is my baby being offered a MenB vaccine?

This vaccine helps protect babies against MenB disease, which is a major cause of meningitis and septicaemia in infants and young children. This vaccine is being offered in addition to the MenC vaccine, which has been very successful at protecting children against MenC disease but does not protect against other strains of meningococcal bacteria.

The Men B vaccine should be given with the other routine vaccinations at:

- two months, normally in the left thigh
- four months, normally in the left thigh, and
- 12 months, normally in the left thigh

The number of MenB cases peaks at five months of age. Vaccinating babies on time helps protect them before they are at highest risk of developing MenB disease.

The MenB vaccine will not protect against other bacteria and viruses that can cause meningitis and septicaemia.

So if you are at all concerned about your baby at any time, then trust your instincts and speak to your GP or call 111.

Is this vaccine safe?

The MenB vaccine has been thoroughly tested and meets strict safety criteria.

Does the MenB vaccine have any side effects?

Some babies may:

- have a temperature (fever)
- have redness, swelling or tenderness where they had the injection, or
- be a bit irritable and lose their appetite.

These normally clear up within one or two days of vaccination.

Why do I need to give my baby paracetamol following the two month and four month vaccinations?

Fever can be expected after any vaccination, but is very common when the MenB vaccine is given with the other routine vaccines at two and four months. The fever shows the baby's body is responding to the vaccine, although the level of fever depends on the individual child and does not indicate how well the vaccine has worked.

Giving paracetamol will reduce the risk of fever, irritability and general discomfort (including pain at the site of the injection) after vaccination.

How much paracetamol should I give my baby and when?

You will need to give your baby a total of three doses of paracetamol (2.5ml of infant paracetamol 120mg/5ml suspension) to prevent and treat any potential fever after

both the two month and the four month vaccination visits.

You should give the first dose of paracetamol as soon as possible after your two month vaccination visit. You should then give the second dose four to six hours later and the third dose four to six hours after that.

You will need to follow the same steps after your four month vaccinations.

If you do not have any paracetamol liquid for infants at home you should get some in time for your first vaccination visit. It is widely available from pharmacies and supermarkets.

For more information please see the longer version of this leaflet.

Are there any babies who shouldn't have this vaccine?

Yes, speak to your doctor if your baby has:

- had a serious allergic reaction to any vaccination
- had a serious allergic reaction to the first MenB vaccination
- a fever on the day of the appointment
- a bleeding condition such as haemophilia

Where can I get more information?

The following charities provide information, advice and support:

Meningitis Research Foundation

Free helpline 080 8800 3344

www.meningitis.org

Meningitis Now

Freephone Meningitis Helpline 0808 80 10 388

9am to 10pm, every day

www.meningitisnow.org

Or go to: www.nhs.uk/vaccinations

If you are at all worried about your baby's health at any time, then trust your instincts and speak to your GP or call 111.



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