

Meningococcal Vaccine Booster Dose

Meningococcal disease

Meningococcal disease, caused by the *Neisseria meningitidis* bacteria, can quickly cause severe illness, such as meningitis and sepsis, in otherwise healthy individuals. Meningococcal disease can affect people of any age, but adolescents and young adults age 16 to 21 years have the highest rates of meningococcal disease.

That's why all adolescents are recommended to get a dose of quadrivalent meningococcal conjugate vaccine (MenACWY) at age 11-12 years and then a booster at age 16 years. The booster is important to ensure that kids are protected during the years when they are at highest risk for disease.

Meningococcal vaccination coverage

There's a good news/bad news situation for MenACWY vaccination rates in Minnesota.

The good news: Coverage for the first dose of MenACWY vaccine is high. Data from the Minnesota Immunization Information Connection (MIIC) show that 70.8% of Minnesota 13-year-olds years had received at least one dose of MenACWY.

The bad news: Coverage for the booster dose of MenACWY vaccine is troublingly low. MIIC data show only 47.3% of 19-year-olds had received a booster dose.

Protection after a single dose of MenACWY vaccine has been shown to wane after five years. Adolescents who only receive a single dose between the ages of 11-12 years may not be fully protected when they are most at risk for disease. Increasing booster dose coverage is vital for making sure adolescents and young adults are protected when they are at highest risk.

Help us protect adolescents

- Reminder/recall is a process for improving immunization coverage through sending notices to individuals due (reminder) or overdue (recall) for immunizations.
 - In June 2019, we will use information from MIIC to send a reminder postcard to parents and guardians of 16-year-olds across the state who are due for their MenACWY booster dose. The postcard reminds parents/adolescents to ask their provider about the booster dose. It will also include messages about catch-up vaccines and meningococcal B (MenB) vaccine. We plan for this to be the first of many campaigns to help raise awareness about the importance of the booster and get more adolescents immunized.
 - You can conduct reminder/recall to improve booster coverage among the adolescents you serve. Use MIIC's [Client Follow-Up \(www.health.state.mn.us/people/immunize/miic/train/followup.html\)](http://www.health.state.mn.us/people/immunize/miic/train/followup.html) feature to identify adolescents who are due for the booster dose. Consider also using reminder/recall features available in your organization's software or phone system.

- Recommend MenACWY vaccine as the standard of care.
- Use stories to help convey the severity of meningococcal disease and other vaccine-preventable diseases. Data and statistics are easily forgotten, but stories get remembered. They can help parents understand why immunizations are so important for protecting their child and the community.
 - We have a meningococcal story on our website that can be a great example to share with patients. Read [Ginny and Andy's Story - Meningococcal Disease \(www.health.state.mn.us/people/immunize/basics/stories/ginny.html\)](http://www.health.state.mn.us/people/immunize/basics/stories/ginny.html).
- Cost should not be a barrier to getting immunized. Make sure parents know about the Minnesota Vaccines for Children (MnVFC) program. The MnVFC program offers free or low-cost vaccines to individuals who do not have insurance or whose insurance does not cover the cost of vaccines. Parents can get more information on our [Free or Low-Cost Shots for Children \(www.health.state.mn.us/people/immunize/basics/howpay.html\)](http://www.health.state.mn.us/people/immunize/basics/howpay.html) website.

Minnesota school requirements

Every year, schools are required to report the immunization or exemption status of students in kindergarten through 12th grade to us. It is called the Annual Immunization Status Report (AISR).

Schools have been reporting on the first dose of MenACWY for seventh graders since September 2014. This fall, we will ask schools to begin collecting information in the AISR on the booster dose of MenACWY for students in 12th grade. This update to required reporting is being rolled out in a phased approach.

- For the 2019-2020 school year, schools will be able to submit the AISR without complete booster dose data if they need more time to collect records for this new age group.
- For the 2020-2021 school year, reporting the booster dose will be required to submit the AISR.

Consider offering meningococcal B vaccine

MenB vaccine is an additional meningitis vaccine that covers another strain of meningococcal disease. Consider offering it to any 16 year old getting MenACWY. These vaccines can be given at the same time, and remember to schedule a future appointment for the second dose of MenB vaccine one month later.

Resources

- Go to [Meningococcal Disease Information for Health Professionals \(www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/meningococcal/hcp.html\)](http://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/meningococcal/hcp.html) to find information on disease reporting, vaccination guidance, and more. This page includes a link to our "Meningococcal Vaccination Pocket Guide" with quick information on the MenACWY and MenB vaccines, including age and risk indications.
- Explore meningococcal immunization data on the [Minnesota Public Health Data Access: Adolescent immunizations \(https://data.web.health.state.mn.us/web/mndata/immunization_adolescent\)](https://data.web.health.state.mn.us/web/mndata/immunization_adolescent).