

NEW 2018-2019 Maine School Entry Requirement for Meningococcal Vaccine Frequently Asked Questions

- **What is the new meningococcal vaccination requirement?**

Starting in the 2018-2019 school year, all students entering, advancing, or transferring into 7th grade and 12th grade in Maine public and private schools must have proof that they have the age appropriate meningococcal vaccines (MCV4) serogroups A, C, W, and Y.

- One dose of MCV4 is required for all students entering 7th grade.
- Two doses of MCV4 are required for students entering 12th grade, with a minimum of 8 weeks between dose one and dose two. If the first dose of MCV4 was administered on or after the 16th birthday, a second dose is not required. If a student entering 12th grade is 15 years of age or younger, only one dose is required.

- **Why was the meningococcal vaccination requirement added?**

Meningococcal disease is a rare but dangerous disease that strikes healthy young people without warning. It can cause meningitis and sepsis. Meningococcal infections can be treated with antibiotics, but even with treatment, about 10-15% of people who get sick will die. Another 10-20% will survive but suffer lifelong disabilities such as hearing loss, loss of arms or legs, or brain damage.

Meningococcal disease spreads easily in large groups and in dormitory-style settings. An infected person can spread the disease by coughing or sneezing directly into the face of others, by kissing a person on the mouth, or by sharing a glass or cup. That is why it is so important to make sure teens and young adults get vaccinated when they are at most risk.

The meningococcal vaccine is the best protection from this very serious disease. It can affect all ages, but teens and young adults are at highest risk of getting this disease. The meningococcal vaccine has been recommended by many health care providers for more than a decade. It is a school requirement in more than 20 states.

- **Which vaccine does my student need?**

MCV4 is the preferred vaccine for preteens and teens. It helps protect them from the four most common types of meningococcal disease in the U.S. (types A, C, W and Y). There are currently two FDA approved vaccines available in the U.S., with the brand names Menactra and Menveo. Either of these vaccines will satisfy the new school requirement.

Another meningococcal vaccine is also available for teens. It is the Serogroup B meningococcal vaccine (MenB), brand names Bexsero and Trumenba. This vaccine is not required for school entry and cannot be used to fulfill the school entrance requirement. It helps protect against a different type of meningococcal disease. Talk to your health care provider if you have any questions about MenB vaccine.

- **Why does the CDC recommend a routine booster dose of MCV4 for adolescents age 16 years and older?**
Protection from a single dose of MCV4 vaccination declines in most adolescents within 5 years. A second dose is needed at age 16 to boost protection during the ages when adolescents are at highest risk of meningococcal disease.
- **What if my student received one dose of MCV4 vaccine just before the 16th birthday? Does the student need the second dose?**
Yes. If the student was vaccinated at age 15 years 11 months, the student will need a second dose after age 16. The minimum interval between dose one and dose two must be at least 8 weeks.
- **What if a student had meningitis as an infant or child, will they still need the vaccine?**
Yes. A history of meningitis does not meet the school requirement. A student with a history of meningitis will still need to meet the meningococcal vaccination requirement for 7th and 12th grade entry.
- **What exemptions are available under Maine law?**
Maine law describes three exemptions for student immunization requirements. Schools should maintain an up-to-date list of students with exemptions so those students can be excluded quickly if an outbreak occurs.
 - **Medical exemptions:** Physicians may grant, in writing, an exemption for students for whom immunizations are not medically indicated.
 - **Religious:** You may request an exemption for children from immunization requirements if the immunization is contrary to your religious beliefs. The parent or guardian requesting an exemption needs to provide the school with a signed note stating the objection. Religious exemptions must be renewed annually.
 - **Philosophical exemptions:** You may request an exemption for children from immunization requirements if the immunization is contrary to your personal beliefs. The parent or guardian requesting an exemption needs to provide the school with a signed note stating the objection. Philosophical exemptions must be renewed annually.
- **When should students get vaccinated with MCV4?**
Now. Avoid the rush and make sure your children can start school on time. Parents are encouraged to make an appointment for their incoming 7th and 12th grade children to get a meningococcal vaccination as soon as possible. Children will need proof of this vaccination in order to attend a Maine public or private school this fall.