



National Institute for Public Health
and the Environment
Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport

Vaccination against meningococcal disease

National Immunisation Programme



Protect yourself and others

You received an invitation to get a vaccination that will protect you against meningococcal disease. Getting this injection will prevent you from becoming ill or infecting your friends. If more young people get the vaccination, it reduces the risk the disease will spread.

What is meningococcal disease?

Meningococcal bacteria can cause meningitis or blood poisoning. These are very serious illnesses. Meningitis can cause permanent brain damage. For example, your memory may be affected, or you could suffer from hearing loss.



“If I had been given a choice, I would not have gone through this.”



Felice was only an infant when her mother discovered tiny dark spots on her torso. Her grandmother was visiting and worried about the symptom, so they rushed the baby to the hospital. As a 16-month-old infant, she was gravely ill. It turned out she had blood poisoning. To save her life, the doctors had to amputate both her legs. Felice is an adult now and has had countless operations over the years. She has a job and a boyfriend and leads an ordinary life as much as possible.

Read Felice's story at rijksvaccinatieprogramma.nl/felice

Blood poisoning can severely damage your blood vessels, making it necessary to amputate a foot, hand, arm or leg. People sometimes become so ill from the bacterial infection that they die. Fortunately, the risk to get ill due to meningococcal bacteria is very low.

How does the bacteria get into your body?

The meningococcal bacteria spread through the air, lodging in your nose or throat. Coughing, sneezing or kissing can spread the infection. In places where people are close together, it is easy for them to infect each other. If you do become ill, the illness will usually show up within a few days after being infected.

Get that jab against meningococcal disease

- Meningococcal disease is serious.
- If you have the bacteria, you can infect other people by sneezing, coughing or kissing, even if you do not feel ill yourself.
- You will receive an invitation for the vaccination in the post.
- Only vaccination can prevent you from becoming ill.
- The jab can also help you avoid infecting others.

The bacteria can be present in your nose or mouth



1 jab in your upper arm



Protect yourself and others



A vaccination to prevent meningococcal disease

Fortunately, you can get an injection that protects you against meningococcal disease. You were probably vaccinated against meningococcal disease when you were 14 months old. That vaccination was to protect you from type C meningococcal bacteria. The injection that you are getting now protects you from several types of meningococcal bacteria: types A, C, W and Y. The new vaccination will protect you for at least 5 years. This vaccine has been used for many years all across the world, so we know that it is safe.

How does the vaccine work?

The vaccine contains specific pieces of the bacteria. These specific pieces cannot make you ill. These key parts of the bacteria ensure that your immune system will recognise the meningococcal bacteria. If you do get a meningococcal infection after being vaccinated, your immune system will kill the bacteria, so you will not become ill. You will get the vaccination in your upper arm. The injection site may become red or a bit swollen. This reaction disappears after a day. On the day you get vaccinated, you can go to school or play sports as usual.

Why are you being offered the vaccination?

You may be wondering why you are being offered this vaccination now. Research shows that you are more likely to have the meningococcal bacteria in your nose or throat after you reach the age of 14. Also, the bacteria spreads easily among young people between the ages of 14 and 20. That is why all young people are offered the jab when they turn 14.

Would you like to report a side-effect of the vaccination?

As stated, there is a small chance that the injection site may become a bit red or swollen. People may sometimes develop a mild fever or slight headache after the injection. You won't usually notice any symptoms after the vaccination. Serious side-effects are very rare. If you do experience any discomfort after getting vaccinated and think it may be caused by the injection, you can report it to the Lareb Pharmacovigilance Centre. This institute tracks and investigates all side-effects.

More information about Lareb is available on the website at rijksvaccinatieprogramma.nl/english. The website also includes the patient information leaflet for the vaccine.

Vaccinations outside the National Immunisation Programme

There are also vaccines that are not included in the National Immunisation Programme. These vaccinations are also available for you. However, since they are not part of the programme, you will have to pay for them yourself. If you would like to get these vaccinations, you can contact your family doctor or a vaccination centre.

Go to rivm.nl/vaccinaties to read more about the vaccines available in the Netherlands. Are you planning a trip abroad? Check with the travel clinic or GGD vaccination office to see if you will need any additional vaccinations.

Information about the vaccination

When you get the vaccination, the youth healthcare services documents your vaccination in three different places: in the records maintained by the youth healthcare services, on your vaccination certificate, and in the national records maintained by the National Institute for Public Health and the Environment (RIVM).

RIVM uses your information for various purposes. Firstly, RIVM wants to know how many people are vaccinated. Secondly, RIVM will send you a reminder if you have not received a vaccination.

Finally, the records are used to provide you with a copy of your vaccination certificate at your request – convenient if you are going on a trip and want to know what diseases you are already vaccinated against.



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PO Box 1 | 3720 BA Bilthoven | The Netherlands
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