

Dear Young Person / Parent or Guardian

Meningococcal ACWY (MenACWY): Helping to protect your child against meningococcal disease and septicaemia

This academic year, students in year 11 are being offered the MenACWY vaccination through a one-off catch up programme to ensure that this age group are protected before they leave secondary education. This is due to a significant increase of the numbers of Meningitis W cases. Your child may have had a MenC vaccination as a baby and again more recently, but this will not protect them against the other meningococcal strains included in this vaccination. Therefore this vaccine is replacing the MenC for teenagers as part of the routine schedule.

On the reverse of this letter is information about the disease and the vaccination, which we hope you will find useful. If you would like more details, please visit

<http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/vaccinations/pages/men-acwy-vaccine.aspx>, you can also talk to the Immunisation team (numbers below), or your school nurse.

Immunisation Team contact telephone numbers:

Brighton:
01273 696011 ext. 3789

Chichester:
01243 815832 / 01243 812533

Crawley:
01293 600300 ext. 3985

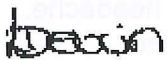
As your child is now older and able to consent for themselves we will ask them to complete a consent form on the day of vaccination. Please discuss this vaccination with your child beforehand and if you feel they are unable to consent for themselves contact the team on any of the numbers above.

If you **do not** wish for your child to be offered this vaccination please discuss this with them, complete the opt-out form below and **return to their school in the next seven days**. We would be grateful if you could tell us your reason for opting out. If we do not receive a signed and completed opt-out slip, your child will be *offered* the MenACWY vaccination when we visit their school.

We hope that you will feel confident having the MenACWY vaccine which will help to protect your child against very serious illness.

If you are happy for your child to be offered the MenACWY vaccination you do not need to do anything.

Yours sincerely



Laura Devlin
Vaccination Coordinator – Immunisation Team, Sussex Community NHS Trust

MenACWY Vaccination Catch-up Programme 2015/2016 Opt-Out Form

Please complete, detach and return this slip to your child's school in the **next seven days** if you **do not** wish for them to receive the MenACWY vaccination.

I do not want my child to have the MenACWY vaccination	Date:
Child's full name:	Child's date of birth:
School name:	Form group:
Reason for opt-out:	Signature (of person with parental responsibility):

Meningococcal Disease FAQ's

What is meningococcal disease? - Meningococcal bacteria can cause meningitis (inflammation of the lining of the brain) and septicaemia (blood poisoning). Both diseases are very serious and can kill, especially if not diagnosed early. The early symptoms of meningococcal disease are similar to those of flu, and diagnosis can be difficult. It makes sense to be aware of the signs and symptoms of Meningitis even if you have been vaccinated against some strains of the disease. A full description of the signs and symptoms of meningitis and septicaemia can be found at www.meningitis.org and www.meningitisnow.org

What causes meningococcal disease? - There are five main groups of meningococcal bacteria that can cause meningitis and septicaemia – A, B, C, W and Y. The same bacteria that cause this serious disease are also commonly carried in the back of the nose and throat, especially in young adults.

How common is it? - Meningococcal group C disease is now rare since MenC vaccination was introduced to the national immunisation programme in 1999. Since 2009, however, there has been a large increase in MenW disease in England, resulting in several deaths among infants and teenagers.

Why do I need to get the vaccine? - As an older teenager, you become at higher risk of getting MenW meningococcal disease, so you need to get vaccinated to protect yourself. Vaccination also reduces the risk of you carrying the bacteria and so protects other people around you. This should, in turn, prevent the numbers increasing to serious levels. You may have had a MenC vaccination as a baby and again more recently but this will not protect you against other meningococcal groups. The MenACWY vaccine will increase your protection against MenC and help to protect you against three other meningococcal groups (A, W and Y).

Do I have to have it? - All vaccinations in the UK are voluntary but it's recommended that everybody in this age group has the MenACWY vaccine to help protect themselves and others, such as young infants, who may be particularly susceptible to this disease. You, or your parent/guardian, have to consent to have the vaccine.

What if I want the vaccination but my parents don't agree? - If you can show that you understand the benefits and risks of MenACWY vaccination, you can consent to have the vaccine. But it's hoped that you will discuss the matter as a family and come to a shared decision.

What if I want more information before consenting? - If you feel you need more information about any aspect of vaccination you or your parents can always speak to the nurse or GP.

Is the vaccine safe? - The vaccine has been used for many years across the world and has an excellent safety record. Serious side effects from the vaccine are rare.

Does the vaccination hurt? What are the common side effects? - It's like a sting. You may get soreness and some redness and swelling in your arm after the injection - you may also get a headache, but these symptoms should disappear after one or two days. If you feel unwell at any time after vaccination, you should contact your GP.

Why choose self-consent? - Children in year 11 are able to consent for themselves. Parents are asked if they feel that this type of consent is not appropriate for their child, and an alternative type of consent is provided.