

Your guide to the free MenB vaccine

Help protect yourself from meningitis and septicaemia



The MenB vaccines help to protect against most strains of group B meningococcus, which is now the most common cause of meningococcal disease in the UK.

Meningococcal disease is a rare but serious condition that can result in life changing disabilities or even death (in 10% of cases).

Young people are considered a high-risk group, especially when studying and living in close quarters, as they can carry the bacteria without showing symptoms.

The MenB vaccine is part of the routine childhood vaccination schedule, but it is **only routinely given to babies** (at 8 weeks, 12 weeks, and 1 year old). Because this infant vaccine was only introduced in 2015, most young people over the age of 11 did not receive a MenB vaccine as children. Therefore, it is important to get your MenB vaccine if you are eligible.

Who is eligible for the MenB vaccine?

You are eligible if you:

- were born between 2 July 2007 and 1 July 2008
- are starting as an undergraduate at university for the first time in autumn 2026 (**and** were born on or after 21 July 2001)
- will be living in further education accommodation or student halls for the first time in autumn 2026 (**and** were born on or after 21 July 2001).

MenB vaccines

There are two vaccines approved for use in Northern Ireland, Bexsero and Trumenba. Both vaccines have a good safety record and produce a good immune response to the meningococcal group B bacteria.

What is Bexsero?

Bexsero is a vaccine that helps protect against most strains of MenB. **Bexsero is the vaccine that you will receive in Northern Ireland.** It contains four different proteins chosen to provide as broad protection as possible. It has been given to millions of babies in the Northern Ireland routine immunisation programme since 2015 and has led to a 75% reduction in MenB disease in vaccinated age groups.

What is Trumenba?

Trumenba is another vaccine that helps to protect against MenB. It has been given to over 3 million teenagers and young adults in the US and some other countries. It contains two different forms of a protein present on the surface of most meningococcal bacteria.

How many doses of MenB vaccine do I need?

You only need 2 doses of the Bexsero vaccine, at least 4 weeks apart, to provide rapid protection. The vaccine is given by injection, usually in the upper arm.

How soon will I be protected?

It takes at least 2 weeks from your second dose of vaccine for your body to produce enough antibodies to give you a good level of protection. It is important that you try to get both doses before the autumn, particularly if you are starting university.

You can read about the Bexsero vaccine here:

www.medicines.org.uk/emc/product/5168/pil#gref

You can read about the Trumenba vaccine here:

www.medicines.org.uk/emc/product/2670/pil

Common side effects

It is common to get some swelling, redness or tenderness where you have the injection. You may also get a mild fever, nausea, headache or muscle aches but these symptoms should disappear after 1 or 2 days.

You can take over the counter pain medication such as paracetamol to manage these symptoms if needed. More serious side effects are rare. If you are worried about any symptoms, please seek advice from your GP or pharmacist.

Are there any other vaccines for meningococcal disease?

Cases of meningococcal disease due to other groups of the bacteria are now rare in the UK, thanks to effective vaccination.

Young people in Northern Ireland are offered a vaccine against groups A, C, W and Y at school, but this vaccine does not protect you against MenB. If you think you have missed out on the MenACWY vaccine, you can check and catch-up with your GP.

What if I have already had a meningococcal vaccine?

Students coming from overseas should try and start the MenB vaccine course before coming to Northern Ireland. If you are offered a MenB vaccine, you should let your healthcare professional know if you think you have had one before. They will recommend the right vaccine for you and the number of vaccines required.

Will it stop me getting meningitis and septicaemia?

Meningitis and septicaemia are rare but severe diseases that can kill or leave people with life changing disabilities and health problems. The vaccine protects against most strains of MenB bacteria but there are other causes of meningitis and septicaemia so you should still be aware of the signs and symptoms and should seek urgent medical advice if you or someone else has these symptoms. Don't forget to also look out for your friends if they are feeling unwell.

See pages 5, 6 and 7 for more information on specific symptoms to be aware of or visit:

www.nidirect.gov.uk/conditions/meningitis

Vaccines will be available from GP practices and participating community pharmacies. For more information, please visit **www.nidirect.gov.uk/menb-vaccine**



Do the glass test

Someone with septicaemia may develop a few red or purple pin-prick spots with fever. Later on the rash can develop into purple blotches that do not fade under pressure. You can test for this by pressing the side of a drinking glass against the rash. If you have a fever and are developing spots or blotches that do not fade under pressure, **get medical help immediately by calling 999** or getting someone to take you to the nearest hospital emergency department. Never wait for a wider rash. It can be a late sign or may not appear at all. If someone is ill and getting worse, get medical help immediately.

On dark skin, check inside the eyelids or roof of the mouth where the spots may be more visible.



Don't forget your MenB record card

You will need a second MenB vaccine dose at least 4 weeks after the first dose to give you the best protection.



Signs and symptoms

Initially meningococcal disease can be like a bad case of flu. But anyone affected will usually become seriously ill within a few hours. Early treatment can save your life so it is sensible to be aware of some main signs and symptoms.

Severe headache

Stiff neck

High temperature

Seizures or fits

Drowsy or difficult to wake

Confusion and/or irritability

Cold hands and feet

Be aware of the signs and symptoms

Meningitis and septicaemia are very serious and require urgent attention. One or more of these symptoms may develop and they can appear in any order and be mixed between the two illnesses.

It is important to seek early medical advice if you or a friend have symptoms of concern or a condition that is getting rapidly worse. Don't wait for a rash to appear – get medical help quickly.



These common symptoms

Dislike of bright light

Rapid breathing

Vomiting or diarrhoea

Stomach cramps

Pale blotchy skin

Rash or bruising rash*

Joint or muscle pain

You can find a full description of the signs and symptoms of meningitis and septicaemia including images and videos at www.meningitis.org
www.meningitisnow.org
and from the NI direct website
www.nidirect.gov.uk/conditions/meningitis

*see 'Do the glass test' on page 5.



If you experience any suspected side effects to the vaccine, you can report these on the Yellow Card website, by calling 0800 731 6789 (9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday) or by downloading the Yellow Card app.

<https://yellowcard.mhra.gov.uk>

For more information on meningitis, septicaemia and the MenACWY or MenB vaccinations please visit:



For more information on the MenACWY vaccination, you can read: **www.publichealth.hscni.net/publications/are-you-aged-25-years-and-starting-university-first-time-menacwy-immunisation-leaflet**



Information on the MenB vaccination



Meningitis Research Foundation
free helpline 0808 800 3344



Meningitis Now
24 hour helpline 0808 801 0388

If you have any questions, speak to your practice nurse, GP or pharmacist.



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