



Important Facts for Parents to Know about

# The Meningococcal Vaccine

**The meningococcal vaccine prevents most cases of meningococcal disease, a serious disease that can cause permanent damage or death.**

- Meningococcal disease is transmitted from person to person through the air or by contact with saliva (e.g., kissing, sharing a glass).
- About 10 to 15 percent of children and young adults who get the disease (or 1,000- 1,500 out of 10,000 people infected) will die. Another 10 percent will suffer serious permanent damage including mental retardation, hearing loss, seizures, strokes, or the loss of limbs as a result of gangrene.

**The vaccine protects (for several years or longer) at least 85% of older children, adolescents and young adults who receive it.**

**More than half of the people who receive the vaccine have *no side effects* at all. Of those people who do have a reaction, most have only a mild reaction.**

- Mild reactions are experienced by up to 40 percent of people receiving the vaccine. These reactions include pain and redness where the shot was given.
- Aspirin-free pain reliever can be used to reduce fever and soreness associated with mild and moderate reactions.

**In rare cases (less than 200 out of 10,000 shots given, or 2% of cases) people have a moderate reaction to the vaccine.**

- Moderate reactions are usually a fever lasting no more than 48 hours.

**In very rare cases (far less than 1 person out of 10,000 shots given, or about 0.0003% of cases) a more serious reaction could occur.**

- Serious reactions are an allergic response that can cause difficulty in breathing.
- If you do notice a serious reaction, you should contact your doctor immediately.

**Your child's chance of being harmed by meningococcal disease is far greater than any chance of being harmed by the vaccine.**

- Immunizations are one of the most important ways parents can protect their children against serious infectious diseases.

parents:

**Please also read the Vaccine Information Statement on the meningococcal vaccine from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. It is an important source of information about vaccines.**