

Spring 2023

Dear Parents/Guardians:

We want to inform you of a new Immunization requirement that will be in effect for students enrolling in Fall 2023 semester in New Mexico.

- **All students entering 11th grade who are 16 years and older, will be required to get a second dose of a vaccine called Meningococcal ACWY or MenACWY.**
- **If your teen is not yet 16, but is entering 11th grade, wait until your teen turns 16 to get the booster and please let the school nurse know.** Boosters given before age 16 don't count and would have to be repeated.

Most students have had the first dose of this vaccine at age 11 or 12, since New Mexico schools have required the first dose since 2019.

To go along with experts' advice, teens need a booster dose of MenACWY at age 16. Since most students entering into 11th grade are age 16 or older, this is the best time to get them immunized.

Meningococcal meningitis is rare, but strikes quickly and can be devastating, even resulting in death or disability. Teens and young adults are at high risk of getting sick with meningococcal meningitis, which is why this is the best time to boost their immunity.

When your teenager turns age 16, please arrange to get them immunized so they will be protected. Your child can get all of their needed shots in their doctor's office and in many pharmacies, and there will be "Got Shots" clinics in July and August around the state to make it easier for families to get their children the shots they need. This summer check <https://www.nmhealth.org/about/phd/idb/imp/> to find a Got Shots clinic near you.

Check with the school's health office for other options for getting your 16-year-old boosted against meningococcal meningitis. Please don't hesitate to reach out with any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,
School Nurse

Andrea Romero
NMDOH Immunization Program Manager

P.S. MenB is another vaccine against meningococcal meningitis, but it is not required for school. We encourage you to talk to your health care provider about whether MenB is right for your teen. MenB vaccine is different from MenACWY and is not a substitute. Some colleges do require incoming freshmen to be vaccinated with MenB.

Enclosure: Meningitis fact sheet

Meningococcal vaccines **4** preteens & teens

What is Meningococcal Disease?

Meningococcal disease is rare, but people do get it—in New Mexico there are about 1-3 cases each year. It can cause serious infections of the lining of the brain and spinal cord or the blood.

It is important to be protected from this disease since it can quickly become very dangerous and even cause death in a few hours. People who recover can have complications like loss of limbs, deafness, nervous system problems, or brain damage.

This disease is caused by the bacteria *Neisseria meningitidis*. There are at least 12 types of *N. meningitidis*, called serogroups. Serogroups A, B, C, W, Y cause most disease.

How does this disease spread?

You can get meningococcal disease without warning. It can spread through close contact (coughing or kissing) or lengthy contact, like living in the same house, dormitory or barracks. Getting vaccinated is the best way to prevent this disease.

What are the symptoms?

- Sudden fever
- Headache
- Stiff neck
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Confusion
- Fever or chills
- Tiredness
- Diarrhea
- Cold hands & feet
- Severe aches or pain in the muscles, joints, chest, or belly
- Rapid breathing
- A dark purple rash

Who is at highest risk?

- Youth ages 16-23
- Babies younger than 1
- People exposed during an outbreak



Image source: The Arizona Partnership for Immunization

What should I do if I get sick?

Go to the hospital as soon as possible! Tell a trusted adult immediately. The disease can be treated with antibiotics, but even when treated, it kills 1-2 out of 10 people who get ill. About 1-2 of every 10 cases suffer from hearing loss, brain damage, kidney damage, amputations, nervous system problems, or severe skin graft scars.



Image source: The Arizona Partnership for Immunization

What vaccines protect against Meningococcal disease?

MenACWY vaccines—Protect against serogroups A, C, W, Y.

- 2 doses recommended for **all children**: 1st dose at ages 11-12 and the 2nd dose at 16-18.
- People with some immune system problems should also get the MenACWY vaccine.

MenB vaccines—Protect against serogroup B.

- MenB vaccines are **only recommended** for those who have certain conditions such as complement component deficiency, are taking Soliris, have a damaged spleen or the spleen has been removed, or are part of a menB outbreak—2-3 doses should be given at ages 10 and older.
- **At the physician's discretion**, MenB vaccines are available to any teen upon request. 2-3 doses may be given for short-term protection at ages 16-23 (ages 16-18 are preferred).

Where can I get vaccinated against this disease?

In New Mexico, **all** recommended vaccines are available at no charge to **all** kids through age 18. Those under 18 will need their parent's permission. Talk to your school nurse or health care provider, or call your Public Health Office.

Are there risks or precautions for Meningococcal vaccines?

- If you've had a bad allergy or a life-threatening allergic reaction after meningococcal vaccine, do not get it.
- If you are pregnant or breastfeeding, do not get it unless clearly needed—like close contact to a case or during an outbreak.
- If you are ill, wait until you recover. Your health care provider can advise you.
- Side effects are usually mild and go away in a few days; serious reactions are rare.

Resources

CDC Meningococcal information:

<https://www.cdc.gov/meningococcal/index.html>

Children's Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP):

<http://www.chop.edu/news/teens-need-two-different-meningococcal-vaccines>

New Mexico Department of Health, Immunization Program: www.immunizenm.org

