

Meningococcal vaccines in Canada: An update

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ABSTRACT

Meningococcal infection is serious, often resulting in fulminant sepsis or meningitis. There are two main types of meningococcal conjugate vaccine currently available in Canada: serotype C meningococcal conjugate, and quadrivalent conjugate for serotypes A, C, Y, and W-135. The immunological characteristics that inform ongoing immunization policies, as well as some of the limits of current knowledge, are presented. All Canadian children should receive a conjugate meningococcal C vaccine (MCV-C) at 12 months of age, and either a booster dose of MCV-C or of quadrivalent meningococcal vaccine (MCV-4) in adolescence. Children at high risk of invasive meningococcal disease should start MCV-C at two months of age, and be given MCV-4 at two years of age.

Key Words: Adolescents; Canada; Children; MCV-4; Meningococcal infection; Meningococcal vaccine

RECOMMENDATIONS

In view of the safety, immunogenicity and effectiveness of meningococcal vaccines, as well as the severity of some *Neisseria meningitidis* infections and public concern about the risk of severe meningococcal disease, the Canadian Paediatric Society recommends the following:

- Canadian children should be immunized with an MCV-C at 12 months of age. Other infants may begin MCV-C immunizations at an earlier age, depending on provincial or territorial vaccine programs and the most up-to-date recommendations published by the National Advisory Committee on Immunization.
- Infants at increased risk for invasive meningococcal infection should begin MCV-C immunization at two months of age.
- MCV-4 should be given to children two years of age or older who are at increased risk for meningococcal infection. MCV-4 may also be considered for HIV-positive children two years of age or older.
- All adolescents should be offered a booster dose with MCV-4 or MCV-C at approximately 12 years of age. How often boosters will be required later in life is unknown. Both vaccines are generally safe and well tolerated.

To report possible adverse events associated with vaccines, go to www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/im/aei-form-eng.php.

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