



National Institute for Public Health  
and the Environment  
*Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport*

# Get that vaccination against *meningococcal disease*





## Meningococcal disease

**You have received an invitation to have a vaccination to protect you against meningococcal disease. This is because type W meningococcal bacteria is currently making a growing number of people ill. Having this vaccination will prevent you from becoming ill or infecting other people.**

Some bacteria and viruses can make you very ill. The meningococcal bacteria is one of these. The bacteria can live in your nose or mouth without you noticing. In most cases it just sits there and luckily, it does not make you ill. Usually your body makes sure that the bacteria disappear after a few months.

## How does the bacteria get into your body?

The meningococcal bacteria spreads through the air and this is how it can get into your throat or nose. You can become infected through coughing, sneezing and kissing. In places where people sit close together it is easy to infect one another. If you do become ill, it is usually a few days after being infected.

## How dangerous is meningococcal disease?

When it starts, meningococcal disease sometimes appears to be an ordinary cold or a stomach upset. The big difference is that meningococcal disease then makes you very ill in a very short time. Meningococcal bacteria can cause you to develop meningitis or blood poisoning. These are very serious illnesses.

Meningitis can leave you with permanent brain damage. For example, your memory may be affected or you could become deaf. Blood poisoning can severely damage your blood vessels. And this could make the amputation of a foot, a hand, an arm or a leg necessary. Sometimes these bacteria make people so ill that they die. Fortunately, the risk that you will become ill due to meningococcal bacteria is very small.

## Vaccination against meningococcal disease

Fortunately, there is a vaccination that protects you against meningococcal disease. You were probably vaccinated against meningococcal disease when you were 14 months old. That vaccination was to protect you from type C meningococcal bacteria.

There are many different types of meningococcal bacteria. At the moment, type W meningococcal bacteria is causing a steep rise in the number of people becoming ill. That is why there is a new vaccination. This vaccination protects you against four types of meningococcal bacteria, including type W.

This vaccination will protect you for a minimum of 5 years. For many years the vaccine that you will get has been given to people who travel to countries where this disease is more common.



## How does the vaccination work?

The vaccination works by helping your immune system to recognise the meningococcal bacteria. If you are infected with a meningococcal bacteria after the vaccination, your immune system will kill the bacteria and you will not become ill. You will get the vaccination in your upper arm. The vaccination site may become slightly red and feel hard. This disappears after a day. Some people develop a slight headache or a temperature, but this is nothing to worry about. On the day you have the vaccination you can go to school or sports as normal.

## Why are you getting the vaccination?

You may be wondering why you have received an invitation for the vaccination. Research has shown that from the age of 14 you are more likely to have the meningococcal bacteria in your nose or throat. Also, the bacteria spreads easily between young people aged between 14 and 20.

This year, all young people who are aged 14 between 1 May and 31 December will be offered the vaccination. The more young people who have the vaccination, the lower the risk of the bacteria being able to spread.

## If you have a side effect from the vaccination and want to report it

You can report this to Netherlands Pharmacovigilance Centre (*Bijwerkingencentrum Lareb*). There is further information about this on the website. On the website you can also read the patient information leaflet that comes with the vaccine against meningococcal bacteria types A,C,W and Y.

The website address is: [Deelditnietmetjevrienden.nl](http://Deelditnietmetjevrienden.nl). The website is only available in Dutch.

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