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Fact Sheet

Meningococcal Group A,C,Y and W-135 Conjugate Vaccine – *Menactra*

1. *What is meningococcal disease and what are the complications of this disease?*

Meningococcal disease is caused by a bacteria called *Neisseria meningitidis*. There are many different groups or types of this bacteria which can cause disease and each type is identified by a letter and/or number. This bacteria can cause infection of joints (septic arthritis), blood (bacteremia or septicemia), the lining of the heart (pericarditis), the lung (pneumonia) or the brain (meningitis).

The most common illness caused by this bacteria is meningitis and there have been outbreaks of meningococcal meningitis in several Canadian provinces since 1989. *Meningococcus* Group C was responsible for the outbreak of bacterial meningitis in PEI in 1990 to 1992 when there were three deaths among young adults. While illness due to *Meningococcus* Group C is still the most common in Canada, cases due to groups Y and W-135 have recently become more common in Canada.

This vaccine replaces the Meningococcal-C conjugated vaccine which provided protection against only Group C disease. *Menactra* provides protection against Group A, C, Y and W-135 disease.

2. *What are the contents of the vaccine?*

This is an inactivated vaccine containing portions of the *N. meningitidis* antigens of serogroups A,C,Y and W-135 bacteria conjugated to a carrier protein from diphtheria. This component of the vaccine is responsible for stimulating the body to make antibodies to meningococcal A,C,Y and W-135 strains of the bacteria, which results in protection for the vaccinated person. In addition, the vaccine contains anhydrous dibasic sodium phosphate, monobasic sodium phosphate, sodium chloride and water. These components serve to increase the way the body produces antibodies. There is no preservative and no mercury in the vaccine.

This vaccine protects against meningococcal disease types A,C,Y and W-135 and is indicated for those between two and 55 years of age. This vaccine does not protect against invasive meningococcal disease caused by *N. meningitidis* serogroup B. All vaccine contents are licensed for use in Canada by the Biologics and Genetics Therapies Directorate within Health Canada. A complete listing of contents is included in the product insert which is available from the public health nurse.

3. What are the possible reactions from the vaccine and how are they managed?

The most serious but rare side effect is a severe allergic reaction (anaphylaxis) which can be life-threatening and occurs within 15 to 20 minutes of receiving the vaccine. Procedures are in place to quickly respond to anaphylaxis. Public health nurses are trained to treat the condition by giving adrenaline and closely monitoring the situation.

The most common side effects after receiving the vaccine are tenderness, redness and swelling at the site where the vaccine is given. Headache and fatigue have been reported, as have flu-like symptoms including malaise, chills, nausea, muscle aches and pains, joint pain or headache.

It is not necessary to give acetaminophen (e.g., Tylenol or Temptra) with every immunization. However, if the person receiving the vaccine is experiencing discomfort or fever after receiving the vaccine, acetaminophen can relieve these symptoms.

- 1. Please remain in the waiting room for 15 minutes after immunization.**
- 2. See a doctor or seek medical attention if your child has any serious side effects.**
- 3. Report serious reactions to the public health nurse whenever they occur.**

4. What are the situations in which Menactra should not be given?

The vaccine should not be given if a person is ill with an acute infection or a fever but can be given when a person has a cold or a chest or ear infection (if there is no fever). The vaccine should not be given to anyone who has had an allergic reaction to anything which is in this vaccine. Anyone who has a known history of Guillain-Barre Syndrome should not receive this vaccine.

5. What are the risks if the vaccine is not received?

The chance of getting meningococcal disease varies greatly from time to time and an outbreak can occur without warning. There is an average of over 100 cases of meningococcal disease caused by groups A,C,Y and W-135 meningococcus in Canada each year, with an increased number of cases when an outbreak occurs. Approximately 10% of people who get a meningococcal disease will die. This vaccine has been reported to provide antibody protection against meningococcal A,C,Y and W-135 disease at a rate of over 98% of adolescents who have received it. From information now available a booster of this vaccine will not be needed.