



Hib/MenC vaccine

Protection against meningitis and septicaemia

This leaflet tells you all about the Hib/MenC vaccine that protects against two diseases caused by *Haemophilus influenzae* type b (Hib) and meningococcal C (MenC) infections.

What does the vaccine protect against?

Meningococcal C

MenC (meningococcal group C) bacteria can cause meningitis (an infection of the lining of the brain) and septicaemia (blood poisoning). Meningitis and septicaemia are both very serious and can cause permanent disability and death if not treated quickly.

The MenC vaccine protects against meningococcal C infection (one of the causes of meningitis). Since the MenC vaccine was introduced in 1999 there has been a more than 95% decrease in cases of disease caused by meningococcal group C bacteria. The meningococcal bacteria are carried in the back of the throat and are spread by prolonged close contact. Ways the bacteria can spread include sneezing, coughing, kissing and sharing personal possessions.

Hib

Hib (*Haemophilus influenzae* type b) disease is an infection caused by bacteria. It can lead to a number of serious illnesses such as blood poisoning (septicaemia), lung infection (pneumonia) and meningitis (an infection of the lining of the brain). The illnesses caused by Hib can kill if not treated quickly.

Before the Hib vaccine was introduced, there were about 800 cases of Hib in young children every year in the UK. Since it was introduced, the number of children under five years of age with Hib has fallen by 99%. The bacteria can be spread in the air from other people's coughs and sneezes. The Hib vaccine only protects against the type of meningitis caused by *Haemophilus influenzae* type b bacteria. It does not protect against any other type of meningitis, so it is important your child has their other meningitis vaccinations when they are offered and that you are aware of the signs and symptoms of meningococcal disease.

Symptoms may appear in any order and some may not appear at all. See below for symptoms.

Babies and toddlers

- Fever, cold hands and feet
- Refusing food and vomiting
- Fretful, dislike being handled
- Drowsy, floppy, unresponsive
- Rapid breathing or grunting
- Spots or rash (see glass test)
- Unusual cry, moaning
- Tense bulging fontanelle (soft spot)
- Stiff neck, dislike bright lights
- Convulsions or seizures

What should I do if I suspect meningitis?

If your child is ill and getting worse, do not wait for a rash as symptoms can appear in any order and some may not appear at all, so get medical help urgently.

If you can't get in touch with your doctor, or are still worried after getting advice, trust your instincts and go to the emergency department of your nearest hospital.

The glass test for meningitis

A rash that does not fade under pressure is a sign of meningococcal septicaemia (blood poisoning).

- Press the side of a clear glass firmly against the skin.
- Spots or a rash (or both) may fade at first.
- Keep checking.
- Fever with spots or a rash (or both) that do not fade under pressure is a medical emergency.
- If your child is ill and getting worse, get medical help immediately.
- On dark skin, the spots or rash can be more difficult to see.

When is the Hib/MenC vaccine offered?

Children are offered their Hib/Men C vaccine alongside their other routine vaccinations between the ages of 12 and 13 months.

How will I know when my child's vaccinations are due?

Children are sent an appointment for their routine Hib/MenC vaccine at the appropriate age. Most GP surgeries and health centres run special vaccination clinics for babies and children. If you change your address, please let your GP surgery know.

What happens at the appointment?

The practice nurse or GP will explain about the vaccination and answer your questions. In children over the age of 12 months, injections are usually given into the upper arm.

Can the vaccine be given if my child is unwell on the day of the appointment?

If your child has a minor illness without a raised temperature (fever), such as a cold, they should have their vaccinations as normal. If your child is ill with a raised temperature on the day the vaccination is due, delay the vaccination until they have recovered.

Are there any other reasons why the vaccine should not be given?

There are very few reasons why the Hib/ MenC vaccine cannot be given. This vaccine should not be given to children who have had a severe (life-threatening) reaction to a previous dose of the vaccine or any ingredient in the vaccine.

If your child:

- has a bleeding disorder (for example haemophilia, where their blood does not clot properly); or
- has had a fit not caused by a raised temperature;

Speak to your GP, practice nurse or health visitor before your child has any vaccination.

What if I miss the appointment?

You should cancel an appointment in advance if you can't make it. If you do miss the appointment or have to delay the vaccination, make a new appointment as soon as possible. Vaccinations can still be given, but your child will be without protection for longer.

Remember, it's important to catch up on most missed vaccinations. If your child has missed a vaccination and is older than the age recommended for the vaccine, talk to your GP, practice nurse or health visitor.

Does the vaccine have any side effects?

Millions of doses of the vaccine have been used and it has a very good safety record. Children can sometimes get a sore upper arm or thigh where the injection was given. Some may develop a small lump where the needle was put in – this is normal and may last some weeks. It does not need any treatment.

They may also get a raised temperature, seem unsettled and may not want to eat much. If your child has a raised temperature and seems unwell you can give them paracetamol liquid. Read the instructions on the bottle carefully and give your child the correct strength and dose for their age.

If you are worried about your child after the vaccination you should speak to your health visitor, doctor or practice nurse.

You can report suspected side effects of vaccines and medicines through the Yellow Card scheme. You can do this online at **yellowcard.mhra.gov.uk** or by calling the Yellow Card line on **0800 731 6789**. (This is a Freephone number and is open Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm.)

Where can I get more information?

Meningitis Now

Visit: **www.meningitisnow.org**

Free helpline: **0808 80 10 388**
(9am to 4pm Monday to Friday)

Email: **helpline@meningitisnow.org**
(Emails are answered during office hours only.)

Meningitis Research Foundation

Visit: **www.meningitis.org**

Free helpline: **080 8800 3344**
(9am to 5pm Monday to Friday)

Email: **helpline@meningitis.org**
(Emails are answered during office hours only.)

If you have any questions or want more information, you can visit **111.wales.nhs.uk**, talk to your doctor or nurse or call **NHS 111 Wales**.

You can find out more about the vaccine used, including its contents and possible side effects, at **www.medicines.org.uk/emc**. You will need to enter the name of the vaccine in the search box. The vaccine currently used is Menitorix®.

To order more copies of this leaflet, visit:
phw.nhs.wales/services-and-teams/healthinformation-resources

To find out how the NHS uses your information, visit: **111.wales.nhs.uk/lifestylewellbeing/yourinfoyourrights**