

Improving
protection
against
meningitis C

13-14 YEARS
12-13 MONTHS
3 MONTHS

The ages when your child has his or her meningitis C vaccinations are changing.

This leaflet describes the changes in detail and lets you know how your child will benefit from them.

For parents, meningitis and septicaemia are two of the most feared childhood illnesses.

Before the meningitis C (MenC) vaccination programme was introduced in the UK in 1999, infection with meningococcal C bacteria in children resulted in many deaths from meningitis and septicaemia every year.

Since then, it's estimated that about 13,000 cases and 1300 deaths have been prevented by the vaccine.

In 2006, the MenC vaccination programme was changed to two doses in the first year with a third dose given between 12 and 13 months.

This programme is now being changed again to one dose in the first year at three months of age, a first booster dose at 12 to 13 months and a second booster dose at 13 to 14 years.

This is because vaccination programmes are carefully and constantly monitored to ensure they offer the best protection.

Recent research into the MenC vaccination has shown that one dose of vaccine at around three months now provides sufficient protection to cover children until the booster dose at 12 to 13 months of age.

Protection from the booster declines by the teenage years, and so another booster dose is being added in early adolescence to extend protection later into life.

What are meningitis and septicaemia?

Meningitis is inflammation of the lining of the brain, and can be the result of infection with bacteria or viruses. One of the most serious and common causes of meningitis is by meningococcal bacteria.

As well as meningitis, meningococcal infection can lead to septicaemia (blood poisoning), which can be very serious.

Why is the vaccination programme being changed?

Vaccination programmes are carefully monitored to ensure they offer the best protection. Recent research into the MenC vaccination has shown that one dose of MenC vaccine in the first year of life now provides enough protection until the Hib/MenC booster.

In addition, other research has shown that the protection provided by the vaccination given at 12 to 13 months fades over time, and a booster dose in early adolescence extends the protection later into life.

The vaccination at four months is being stopped and a booster dose is being added at 13 to 14 years.

How will the changes affect my child?

- From 1 June 2013, babies will receive two doses of the MenC vaccination – one at three months of age, and another between 12 and 13 months.
- Starting in the school year 2013/14, a booster dose of the MenC vaccination will be given to children in years 9 or 10, when they are between 13 and 14 years of age.

What do I need to do?

You don't need to do anything – the changes to the MenC vaccination programme will begin to take effect automatically from June 2013.

- Your baby will receive their first MenC vaccination at the routine three-month appointment as presently. The second one will be given as the Hib/MenC vaccine soon after their first birthday.
- If you're the parent of a child in years 9 or 10, you will receive information about the new vaccination from your child's school or local authority, or from your GP.

Be aware, be prepared

Infection with meningococcal C bacteria is not the only cause of meningitis and septicaemia, so you'll still need to be aware of the signs and symptoms of these diseases.

Early warning signs

Bacterial meningitis has a number of early warning signs that usually occur before the other symptoms.

These are:

- pain in the muscles, joints or limbs, such as in the legs or hands
- unusually cold hands and feet, or shivering
- pale or blotchy skin and blue lips

The presence of a high temperature (fever) with any of the above symptoms should be taken very seriously. Phone 999 immediately to request an ambulance.

See the NHS Choices website at www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Meningitis/Pages/Symptoms.aspx for a full description of the symptoms of meningitis.

Where can I get more information?

Talk to your GP or health visitor if you would like further information about the changes to the MenC vaccination schedule and how they will affect your child. Or you can visit www.nhs.uk to find out more.

The following charities also provide information, advice and support:

Meningitis Research Foundation

Free helpline 080 8800 3344
(9am to 10pm weekdays, 10am to 8pm weekends and holidays)
www.meningitis.org

Meningitis Trust

Free 24 hour helpline
0808 80 10 388
www.meningitis-trust.org

Meningitis UK

0117 947 6320
www.meningitisuk.org

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