

Meningococcal Vaccine FAQ

July 2011

What is Penn's meningococcal vaccine policy?

All students who will be living in campus housing AND who are age 21 or younger must submit proof of 1 dose of meningococcal conjugate vaccine (MCV4) that covers serogroups A, C, Y, and W-135 since age 16.

I had the meningococcal vaccine when I was 15-do I still need a booster?

If you are going to be living in campus housing, yes.

Am I required to get the meningococcal vaccine if I'm living off-campus?

No.

I submitted a waiver because I'm a graduate student, but I'm under 21-am I still required to get vaccinated?

- If you'll be living in campus housing, yes. All students living in campus housing who are age 21 or younger must have had a dose of MCV4 after age 16.
- If you'll be living off-campus, no.

Is this policy consistent with the recommendations of the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), American College Health Association, and the American Academy of Pediatrics?

Yes

<http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/pubs/pinkbook/downloads/mening.pdf>

http://www.acha.org/Publications/docs/ACHA_RIPI_Mar2011.pdf

<http://aapredbook.aappublications.org/resources/IZSchedule7-18yrs.pdf>

Why was the vaccine schedule changed?

When MCV4 vaccine was licensed in 2005 it was believed that a single dose would provide protection for at least 10 years. Unfortunately, this has not been the case. Testing has shown that protection actually decreases within 5 years. To protect people when they are at highest risk, the CDC now recommends a booster dose after age 16.

<http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/pubs/pinkbook/downloads/mening.pdf>

<http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vpd-vac/mening/who-vaccinate.htm>

When did the recommendation change?

Very recently. The CDC's Advisory Council on Immunization Practices (ACIP) proposed this change in October 2010 and it was published in the CDC's Morbidity and Mortality Review on January 28, 2011.

How long is the vaccine effective?

A single dose of vaccine appears to be effective for up to 5 years. People who receive a booster dose after age 16 should be protected through the period of highest risk (age 16 through 21).

Is it safe to get a booster?

Available data suggests that the booster dose is very safe; vaccine safety will continue to be monitored. There is evidence that a booster dose of meningococcal conjugate vaccine produces higher antibody titers, which may offer increased protection over a single dose.

http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm6003a3.htm?s_cid=mm6003a3_e

Are there any side effects?

Up to about half of people who get meningococcal vaccines have mild side effects, such as redness or pain where the vaccine was given. These symptoms usually last for one or two days. A small percentage of people who receive the vaccine develop a fever. Severe reactions, such as a serious allergic reaction, are very rare. A nervous system disorder called Guillain-Barré Syndrome has been reported among some people who received MCV4. This happens so rarely that it is currently not possible to tell if the vaccine might be a factor.

<http://www.immunize.org/vis/menin06.pdf>

www.cdc.gov/vaccinesafety/vaccines/gbsfactsheet.html

Which meningococcal vaccines are acceptable?

Quadrivalent meningococcal conjugate vaccines (MCV4), such as Menactra and Menveo, are preferred. Meningococcal polysaccharide vaccine (MPSV4), such as Menomune, is acceptable if MCV4 is not available.

Who can I speak with if I have further questions?

- For general questions about prematriculation immunization requirements, please email or call the SHS Immunization Compliance Office at immun@upenn.edu and 215.746.3535, menu option #4.
- For questions or concerns specific the changes to our meningococcal vaccine policy, please email or call Sharon McMullen, RN, SHS Public Health Nurse, at mcm@upenn.edu and 215.746.0818.

Note: All weblinks are accurate as of 7/18/11.