

Meningococcal Group B (MenB)

Frequently Asked Questions (last updated 18th March 2025)

1. What is meningococcal group B (MenB)?

MenB is a type of meningococcal bacteria that can cause **meningitis** and **septicaemia (sepsis)**. These illnesses are rare but can become **very serious very quickly**.

Some people carry meningococcal bacteria harmlessly in their nose and throat without becoming unwell.

2. What is the MenB vaccine?

The MenB vaccine protects against disease caused by **meningococcal group B bacteria**.

It is **effective at protecting infants** against serious MenB disease, but:

- It does **not prevent all MenB strains**
- It has **limited effect on stopping carriage or spread** of the bacteria

3. Who is offered the MenB vaccine on the NHS in Scotland?

The MenB vaccine has been part of the **routine childhood immunisation programme since 1st September 2015**, following advice from the **Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI)**.

Programme	Eligibility dates
Routine offer	Babies born on or after 1 July 2015
Limited catch-up offer	Babies born between 1 May 2015 and 30 June 2015
Not included	Children born before 1 May 2015 were not offered MenB as part of the routine programme.

4. When is the MenB vaccine given?

The current routine schedule is:

- **8 weeks**
- **12 weeks**
- **12–13 months (booster)**

This schedule was introduced to provide protection as early as possible in infancy.

5. Is there a catchup programme for MenB?

- **Yes**, for children who missed doses **up to 2 years of age**
- **No**, beyond the age of 2 years

There are **no plans** to offer MenB vaccination routinely outside the existing schedule.

6. Why isn't MenB vaccine offered to teenagers or adults?

JCVI recommendations focus on:

- Protecting those at **highest risk**
- Using vaccines where they have the **greatest overall benefit**

Although MenB vaccine is effective in infants, it:

- Has **limited impact on reducing transmission**
- Does **not cover all circulating strains**

For these reasons, there is **no routine MenB programme for teenagers or adults**.

7. What meningitis vaccine do teenagers receive?

Teenagers are routinely offered the **MenACWY vaccine**, usually in **S3 (around age 14)** through school based programmes.

MenACWY protects against meningococcal groups **A, C, W and Y**, but **does not protect against MenB**.

Anyone who missed MenACWY can still receive it **up to their 25th birthday**, particularly before starting university or college.

8. What are the symptoms of meningitis or MenB disease?

Symptoms can **appear suddenly, in any order**, and may be mistaken early on for flu, a cold, or a hangover — especially in teenagers and students.

Symptoms can include:

- High temperature (fever)
- Severe or worsening headache
- Vomiting or diarrhoea
- Cold hands and feet
- Rapid breathing
- Drowsiness or confusion
- Muscle or joint pain
- Stiff neck
- Dislike of bright lights
- A rash that **does not fade when pressed with a glass**

Not everyone will have all symptoms.

9. What should I do if I'm worried about meningitis?

Act quickly — early treatment saves lives.

- **Call 999 or go to A&E immediately** if someone seems seriously unwell
- **Call NHS 111 or your GP** if you are worried or unsure, or think you may have been exposed
- Do not wait for a rash to appear.

10. How is MenB spread?

Meningococcal bacteria live in the **nose and throat** and spread through **close contact**, such as:

- Coughing or sneezing
- Kissing
- Close living arrangements

Many people carry the bacteria without symptoms but can still pass it on.

11. What is the situation with the MenB outbreak in Kent?

- The outbreak is **localised to Kent**
- There is **no evidence of increased risk in Scotland**
- **No additional vaccination or catchup campaigns** are currently recommended in Scotland

Public Health Scotland continues to monitor the situation closely.

12. Can MenB vaccine be obtained privately?

Yes, some pharmacies and providers offer MenB vaccination privately.

Private vaccine sales are **not managed or controlled by NHS Scotland**.

13. Where can I find more information or check vaccination history?

- **NHS Inform – Vaccinations:**
<https://www.nhsinform.scot/gettingvaccinations>
- **NHS Inform – Meningitis:** <https://www.nhsinform.scot/meningitis>

Your GP holds your full vaccination record, please contact them to request a copy of your vaccination history. Vaccination information can also be found in your childhood red book.

Please note that if you were born after 1st July 2015, you will not have received the MenB vaccine through the NHS Vaccination programme.