

## **Meningococcal Disease**

Meningococcal disease is a serious illness caused by a type of bacteria called *Neisseria meningitidis*. It can lead to meningitis (infection of the lining of the brain and spinal cord) and bacteremia or septicemia (infections of the blood). Meningococcal disease often strikes without warning — and can affect people who are otherwise healthy.

There are at least 12 types of *Neisseria meningitidis*, called “serogroups.” Meningococcal vaccines (Menactra, Menveo) are routinely recommended to help protect against serogroups A, C, W, and Y. Serogroup B meningococcal (Men B) vaccines (Bexero, Trumenba) can help prevent meningococcal disease caused by serogroup B, which accounts for approximately 40% of meningococcal disease in the U.S.

The good news is that incidence of meningococcal disease (serogroups B,C,Y as depicted below) has declined annually since the late 1990s and current rates are at historic lows (attached slide). While cases have declined, the overall case fatality ratio remains at 10-15%, and 11-19% of survivors have long-term sequelae (e.g., neurologic disability, limb or digit loss, and hearing loss).

## **New Vaccine Recommendation**

The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) met in June and passed a “permissive” recommendation for meningococcal B (Men B) vaccine. A “permissive” recommendation allows the health care provider to choose whether or not to recommend the specific vaccine for their patients. It does not have the strength of a full recommendation but was chosen because the available data indicated the Men B vaccine effectiveness may wane after a relatively short period of time and the incidence rate of the disease is very low, but the morbidity is very high. The Men B vaccines are expected to protect against the majority of Men B disease strains circulating in the US, however, the full extent of protection will not be known until the vaccine is in regular use.

Who should be vaccinated? A serogroup B meningococcal (Men B) vaccine series may be administered to adolescents and young adults 16 through 23 years of age to provide short term protection against most strains of serogroup B meningococcal disease. The preferred age for Men B vaccination is 16 through 18 years of age.

On October 23, 2015 the MMWR (CDC) published recommendations for Use of Serogroup B Meningococcal Vaccines in Adolescents and Young Adults: Recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices, 2015: <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm6441a3.htm>

Additional information for health care providers and parents can be found on the CDC website at <http://www.cdc.gov/meningococcal>.

## **Vermont Vaccine Availability**

Beginning November 2, 2015 VFC and VFA enrolled provider practices may place orders for Serogroup B meningococcal vaccine, Bexaro (manufacturer Novartis Vaccines during their regular vaccine ordering cycle.