Meningitis ACWY Vaccination

Meningitis bacteria can cause serious infections, including infection around the brain.

There are different types of meningitis bacteria, called strains.

From August 2015 all 14 to 18 years olds in the UK are being offered MenACWY vaccine.

Who needs the ACWY vaccine?

Visitors to Saudi Arabia, and countries south of the Sahara in Africa, are sometimes at risk from the A, W and Y strain of meningitis. Travellers who have close contact with local people are more at risk. People may pick up the infection and bring it back to the UK.

It is a visa requirement for Saudi Arabia to have ACWY vaccination in the 8 years before entering the country and at least 10 days before travel. Your Pharmacist can provide a certificate of proof of vaccination for visa purposes. Some older types of ACWY vaccines need to be repeated after 3 years – please check with your pharmacist.

A single ACWY vaccine injection reduces the risk of infection by about 90%. The vaccine does not protect against all types of meningitis. It is still possible to catch meningitis after vaccination, although the chances are reduced by vaccination.

Your pharmacist can also administer ACWY meningitis vaccine, to 12 to 18 year olds, even if they are not travelling. ACWY vaccine for 14 to 18 year olds has been included in the NHS routine vaccination programme since 2015. There has been a year-on-year increase in the number of meningitis cases in the UK caused by Men W since 2009, and infection has been associated with particularly severe disease and high fatality rates in teenagers and young adults. If the vaccine has already been given through the NHS, it does not need to be repeated, except in some cases as part of visa requirements.

Types of vaccine available

There are two ACWY vaccines. Menveo vaccine and Nimenrix vaccine. These are similar vaccine and are likely to be equally effective. Only one or the other is required.

ACWY vaccination is NOT normally available through the NHS for travelers. Most people requiring ACWY vaccination need to pay privately, unless they are eligible for the routine NHS ACWY vaccine programme for 14 to 18 year olds.

Children

Your Pharmacist is NOT permitted to vaccinate children below 5 years of age. Children below 5 years who need ACWY vaccination should be seen by their GPs or a specialist travel clinic. Some Pharmacist may not offer vaccination to children under 11 years.

Children and young people under 16 years must be accompanied by a parent or guardian when they attend for vaccination.

Side effects

Vaccine injections often cause pain, redness and swelling for a day or two and people often feel a little unwell, with tiredness, aches, headache and feelings of sickness for a day or two. A cold compress applied to the injection site or paracetamol or ibuprofen may be taken to treat these symptoms.

More serious side effects are very rare. Extremely rare immediate allergic reactions to vaccines can occur; if they do an injection of adrenaline would be given by your Pharmacist.

Travel health

Your Pharmacist does NOT provide all the advice and medication you may need for travel. It is important to ask your doctor or a specialist travel clinic for advice. People travelling to Saudi Arabia and Africa often require other vaccines and health advice.

Travel health requirements change. This leaflet was prepared in May 2015. Your GP surgery and specialist travel clinic will provide up-to-date information. The NHS Fit for Travel website is also a good source of information: www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk

In addition to vaccination against ACWY strains of meningitis, travelers may require hepatitis B, tetanus diphtheria polio triple vaccine, MMR (measles, mumps and rubella), typhoid, and influenza vaccination. Rabies vaccine may be required by some people travelling to remote areas. Malaria tablets are required in many parts of Africa and throughout the world, including parts of Saudi Arabia, but not Medina or Makkah (the province surrounding Mecca).

GP surgeries usually do not supply ACWY vaccination, even as a private service. However GP surgeries usually provide other vaccines and services free of cost, usually typhoid and hepatitis A, but not hepatitis B vaccination and malaria medication, which usually needs to be paid for privately. Your Pharmacist may be able to provide malaria tablets and hepatitis B vaccination and influenza vaccination. Meningitis ACWY vaccination is not currently (May 2015) recommended for travel to India, China or South America, although this situation may change.

Re-vaccination

The interval after which Menveo and Nimenrix vaccine should be repeated is not yet known but re-vaccination after 5 to 10 years would be reasonable for travellers to high risk areas. The visa requirement for Saudi is vaccination within the previous 8 years and 10 days.

Further information

See NHS Choices website meningitis pages
http://bit.ly/1SQ5dT2

The NHS Fit for Travel website has specific advice for Umrah and Hajj pilgrimage
http://bit.ly/1QiEoef

NHS information about ACWY vaccine for 14 to 18 years
http://bit.ly/1Bm8f8E

Patient Survey

We would greatly value your feedback on this service. Visit www.pharmacypgd.co.uk/survey or scan the QR code with your smartphone.