

# #24YOUHAVETHEPOWER TIP SHEET

## Talking to Your Parents about Meningococcal Disease and Vaccination

This tip sheet provides information on Invasive Meningococcal Disease (IMD). IMD includes meningitis (an inflammation of the brain and spinal cord) and blood poisoning (septicaemia) caused by meningococcal bacteria. The word meningitis is used to encompass all forms of IMD in this tip sheet.

Meningitis is uncommon but unpredictable, and can even be fatal in 24 hours<sup>1</sup>. But with the facts, you also have the power to become your own advocate and talk to your parents about how vaccination can help protect you.

Your parents are probably familiar with vaccines you needed as a young child. But they might not know about newer vaccines for meningitis that are available to help protect adolescents and young adults.

### Talking to Your Parents:

## TOP 5 Topics to Cover

- 1 Your role:** Let your parents know you want to be active in taking charge of your health and helping to protecting yourself.
- 2 Your risk:** Remind them of the dangerous, even fatal, consequences of meningitis. Tell them that up to 1 in 5 adolescents and young adults can carry the bacteria that can lead to meningitis without showing symptoms<sup>2</sup>.
- 3 Your activities:** Discuss how normal everyday behaviours might put you at risk<sup>3</sup>.
  - a. Hanging out in crowded bars and parties
  - b. Sharing food and drinks
  - c. Close contact and kissing
  - d. Sharing cigarettes
- 4 Your protection:** Don't forget the good news: vaccines are available to help protect against meningitis or other forms of IMD. In fact, vaccination is the most effective method for meningococcal disease prevention<sup>4,5</sup>.
- 5 The appointment:** Ask them to make an appointment with your doctor or pharmacist so you can:
  - a. Learn what vaccines you've already had and those you might need.
  - b. Ask how you can help protect against meningitis. There are two separate vaccines, one for group B and one for groups ACWY<sup>6</sup>.
  - c. Ask about other ways you can take charge of your health. Remember, anything you tell your doctor is confidential.

**Share the Power of Knowledge.** Share these tips with friends and encourage them to speak with a parent, doctor, or pharmacist about getting vaccinated and visit [www.24YouHaveThePower.co.uk](http://www.24YouHaveThePower.co.uk).

#### REFERENCES

1. World Health Organization. Meningococcal meningitis, fact sheet No.141, November 2015.
2. Christensen H, et al. Meningococcal carriage by age: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *Lancet Infect Dis.* 2010;10(12):853-61.
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4. Saez-Llorens X. and McCracken, G.H. Bacterial meningitis in children, *Lancet.* 2003;361:2139-48.
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