

Glossary of Terms

Antibiotics: A drug used to treat infections caused by bacteria.¹

Bacterial meningitis: Inflammation of the thin tissue that surrounds the brain and spinal cord, called the meninges. There are several types of bacterial meningitis, which are caused by certain bacteria. Meningococcal disease is caused by a bacterium called *Neisseria meningitidis*.²

Blood brain barrier: Blood vessels in the brain lined with cells separating the tissues of the central nervous system from blood.¹

Booster: A dose given at sometime after an initial dose to enhance the immune response.¹

Carrier: An individual who harbors the pathogen that causes a specific disease but does not display the signs or symptoms. Carriers are able to transmit the disease to others.¹

Cluster: Multiple cases of a disease that are closely grouped in time and place.³

Conjugate vaccine: Conjugate vaccines consist of polysaccharide antigens (sugar molecules) from disease-causing bacteria linked to protein carrier molecules creating a vaccine with an improved potential to stimulate the immune system. This helps to provide protection for a longer period of time and with better immune responses than with polysaccharide alone.^{4,5}

Contraindications: Specific situation in which a medication, vaccine, procedure or surgery should not be used as it may cause unwanted or dangerous reactions in people with certain diseases or conditions.¹

Co-primary cases: Two or more cases of disease that occur among a group of close contacts with onset of illnesses separated by less than 24 hours.⁴

Endemic: A disease which is constantly present in a specific geographical area.¹

Epidemic: A disease which occurs at higher levels than the expected rate for a sustained time period.¹

Herd immunity: Indirect protection of unvaccinated individuals to a particular infectious disease due to immunity that exists in a large number of vaccinated individuals in a population.⁵

Immunity: Protection against disease. Immunity may be natural due to exposure to a disease, active through vaccination or passive through the administration of immune globulins (antibodies).¹

Immunization: The process by which a person becomes protected against disease. Also referred to as vaccination or inoculation.^{1,5}

Immunogenicity: The ability of a vaccine to generate an immune response.¹

Incidence: A measure of frequency with which a particular disease occurs in a population over a period of time.¹

Indication: The basis or reason for initiation of a treatment, procedure, or test.¹

Induration: The hardening of a normally soft tissue or organ, especially the skin, because of inflammation, infiltration of a neoplasm, or an accumulation of blood.¹

Inflammation: Changes in the tissues of the body in response to infection, injury or disease. Signs of inflammation may include swelling, pain, heat and redness.¹

Intramuscular: Meaning into the muscle¹; the meningococcal vaccine is administered via intramuscular injection.⁶

Local reaction: A reaction that involves or affects the site of injection following inoculation but no other organs or systems; can include pain, redness or swelling at the site of injection.¹

Malaise: A vague feeling of bodily discomfort, as at the beginning of an illness.¹

Meninges: Thin lining of tissue that protects and cushions the brain and spinal cord.⁷

Meningitis: Infection or inflammation of the membranes covering the brain and/or spinal cord.¹

Meningococcal disease: Any type of disease caused by the bacterium *Neisseria meningitidis* including sepsis, meningitis, pneumonia, and septic arthritis.⁸

Meningococcal meningitis: An infection that causes inflammation of the membranes covering the brain and spinal cord caused by *Neisseria meningitidis*.¹

Meningococcal vaccine: A vaccine that provides protection against bacterial infections caused by *Neisseria meningitidis*, a bacterium that can cause meningitis or severe bloodstream infection.²

Meningococcal vaccine recommendations: The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends meningococcal immunization for all adolescents 11-18 years of age, college freshmen living in dormitories⁹, children 2-10 years of age at increased risk for contracting the disease¹⁰, microbiologists routinely exposed to isolates of *Neisseria meningitidis*, military recruits, travelers to or residents of countries in which *Neisseria meningitidis* is hyperendemic or epidemic, those with terminal complement component deficiencies, persons with anatomic or functional asplenia.⁹

Meningococcemia: The presence of *Neisseria meningitidis* in the blood stream.¹

MMWR: Abbreviation for *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report* published by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on a weekly basis containing current vaccine recommendations and epidemiologic reports on the incidence of communicable disease and death in urban areas in the US.¹¹

***Neisseria meningitidis*:** The bacterium that causes meningococcal disease.¹

Outbreak: A sudden occurrence of 3 or more confirmed or probable cases of meningococcal disease in ≤ 3 months among persons residing in the same area who are not close contacts of each other and who do not share a common affiliation, with a primary disease attack rate of ≥ 10 cases/100,000 persons.⁴

Polysaccharide vaccine: A vaccine made from polysaccharides (complex chains of simple sugar molecules) that form the outer coat (capsule) of many bacteria.⁵

Primary case: The first case of a disease that occurs in the absence of a previously known close contact with another patient, also known as the incidence case.⁴

Purpura: A rash that consists of purplish marks that appear bruise-like on the body indicating an infection of the blood stream.^{1,12}

Risk factors: Factors that may contribute to an increased risk of disease¹; vaccination is recommended for those with risk factors associated with meningococcal disease (see Vaccine Recommendations).^{1,9}

Secondary case: A case of disease that occurs after close contact with another individual. Secondary cases of meningococcal disease typically become ill within a week after the onset of illness in the primary case.⁴

Septicemia: Systemic disease caused by the spread of microorganisms and their toxins via the blood stream.^{1,8}

Sequelae: Residual effects of a disease.¹

Serogroup: A group of bacteria having similar antigens (sugar molecules) in common; strains of bacteria that cause meningococcal disease (A, B, C, Y, and W-135).^{8,13}

Spinal tap: A procedure to collect cerebrospinal fluid (found in and around the central nervous system organs, the brain and spinal cord) to check for the presence of disease or injury.¹

Subcutaneous: Meaning beneath or under the skin; the process of administering a vaccine so that it is deposited under the layers of the skin.¹

Titer: The measure of the level of antibodies in blood.¹

Vaccination: The introduction of vaccine into the body for the purpose of inducing immunity.¹

Vaccine: An antigenic formulation that produces immunity, protecting the body from disease.^{1,5}

VAERS: Abbreviation for Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System; a cooperative program for vaccine safety of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Food and Drug Administration designed to collect information about adverse events (possible side effects) that occur after the administration of US licensed vaccines.¹⁴

Viral meningitis: Meningitis caused by a virus; often less severe than bacterial meningitis.²

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