A Big Difference

What is Meningococcal Disease?

Meningococcal disease is a bacterial infection that can cause swelling of the tissue around the brain and spinal cord (meningitis) or an infection of the blood (septicemia). It is rare, but very serious: Ten percent of those who develop meningococcal disease will die. Three out of five adolescent survivors of meningococcal disease suffer permanent physical and mental disabilities such as brain damage, vision loss, and amputations.[1-3]

Are You At Risk?

Meningococcal disease can be spread by direct contact with respiratory or throat secretions through behaviors like sharing a drink or kissing. That's one reason why adolescents and young adults like you are among those at increased risk for meningococcal disease.

Meningococcal disease can be treated with antibiotics, if it is caught early, but early symptoms often resemble the flu, so you may not realize it's something serious right away. Fortunately, there are vaccines to help you stay protected.[4]

The Difference with B

Meningococcal disease is caused by a bacteria called *Neisseria meningitidis.* In the U.S., there are 5 common types of this bacteria, called A, C, Y, W, and B. Until 2014, vaccines could help protect against types A, C, Y, and W, but there was no vaccine in the United States to help protect against type B, which is responsible for approximately 40% of meningococcal disease in U.S. adolescents and young adults.[5-7]

That means, if you were vaccinated against meningococcal disease prior to 2014, you are probably not protected against meningitis B.

Here's the good news. There are now vaccines available that help protect against meningitis B which are administered separately from the vaccine that helps protect against the other four types of *Neisseria meningitidis*.

References: 1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Meningococcal disease. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website. http://www.cdc.gov/meningococcal/index.html. Updated April 1, 2014. Accessed April 2, 2015. 2. Cohn AC, MacNeil JR, Harrison LH, et al. Changes in *Neisseria meningitidis* disease epidemiology in the United States. 3. Borg J, Christie D, Coen PG, et al. Outcomes of meningococcal disease in adolescence: prospective, matched-cohort study. *Pediatrics.* 2009;123:e502-e509. 4. Thompson MJ, Ninis N, Perera R, et al. Clinical recognition of meningococcal disease in children and adolescents. *Lancet.* 2006;367(9508):397-403. 5. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Prevention and control of meningococcal disease: recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP). *MMWR.* 2013;62(RR-2):1-28. 6. McNeil LK, Zagursky RJ, Lin SL, et al. Role of factor H binding protein in *Neisseria meningitidis* virulence and its potential as a vaccine candidate to broadly protect against meningococcal disease. *Microbiol Mol Biol Rev.* 2013;77(2):234-252. 7. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Epidemiology of serogroup B meningococcal disease, United States. Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices, October 30, 2014. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website. http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/acip/meetings/downloads/slides-2014-10/mening-02-MacNeil.pdf. Accessed March 26, 2015.

Check with your doctor about getting vaccinated against meningitis B — the strain of meningococcal disease that pre-2014 vaccines in the U.S. could not help prevent.