

In **YOUR** Hands



Anyone can contract meningococcus!
But every case is *one* too many!

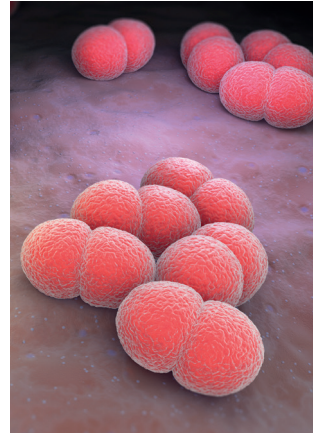
Information brochure

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What are *meningococci*?

Meningococci are bacteria that settle in the nasopharynx of humans. Transmission occurs via droplet infection (e.g. through sneezing, coughing or kissing) or direct, close contact with those infected. An invasive meningococcal disease is very rare. In those who contract it, the disease mainly progresses as **meningitis** or **sepsis (blood poisoning)** and can thus quickly **become life-threatening**.

Meningococci are divided into so-called serogroups; 95% of cases worldwide are caused by the five serogroups A, B, C, W and Y.



The key facts:

- One in ten people carry meningococcus and are therefore a potential transmitter - even without falling ill themselves.
- Fortunately, relatively few people contract meningococcal disease, but it is usually very severe for those who do.
- The carrier rate is low during the first years of life and increases in teenagers and young adults.
- Transmission occurs via droplet infection (e.g. through sneezing, coughing or kissing) or direct, close contact with those infected.

How dangerous is a *meningococcal disease* and how can you become infected?

As the pathogens are transmitted **from person to person**, there is an increased risk of infection, especially in places where many people come together. This can happen when there are **crowds**, for example at festivals, clubs or restaurants, when visiting local markets or using public transport!

Meningococcal disease is often severe and the possible consequences can also be dramatic. Approximately **one in ten cases are fatal**. This can happen within 24 hours.



In **10-20%** of cases, the result of meningococcal disease is severe, permanent damage such as deafness, developmental disorders, severe scarring or even amputations.

How can I recognise *meningococcal disease*?

Unfortunately, the symptoms are often non-specific at the beginning and the disease can easily be mistaken for another illness (e.g. flu). Watch out for:



Fever, bad headaches, shivering, sensitivity to light



Sudden bleeding under the skin: small red-violet dots that get bigger quickly



Dizziness and vomiting, stiff neck



Loss of consciousness, seizures

The symptoms are often unclear, but they must nevertheless be treated immediately, because **approximately one in ten cases become fatal within the first 24 hours**. Speed can save lives!
If suspected, go to hospital immediately!

If suspected, a glass test can give an indication of meningococcal disease.

This is how to do it: Press a transparent glass onto the area where there is bleeding under the skin. If the spots do not disappear, this is a sign of onset meningococcal sepsis (Fig. 1). With a mere skin rash of other origin, the spots would disappear (Fig. 2). It goes without saying that the test is no substitute for visiting a doctor.



What is the situation *in Germany and the world?*



- In 2019, there were 256 meningococcus cases in Germany.
- Nearly half of these diseases affected adults over 25.

A world in transition

Due to worldwide travel and general globalisation, pathogens are also brought back “in your suitcase” from places both near and far. With meningococcal serogroups, this means that the distribution can change rapidly and unpredictably.

Current distribution of the most common serogroups: A, B, C, W, Y



Vaccination

can protect us all!

The 5 most common meningococcal serogroups are found all over the world. Vaccines against these serogroups are available:

the combination vaccination against meningococci of serogroups A, C, W and Y also (called MenACWY) and the vaccination against meningococci B or C (also called MenB and MenC). Wherever you are in the world, getting yourself vaccinated is the best way to protect yourself from infection.

Detailed information on all countries and the corresponding vaccination recommendations are available at any time from the Centre for Travel Medicine.

Centrum für Reisemedizin
(Centre for Travel Medicine)(CRM)



Who should *get vaccinated?*



- **Pupils and students** before **long-term stays in countries where vaccination against meningococci is recommended** (e.g. the Netherlands, Switzerland, England, Italy, Greece, Spain, and also Canada and the USA). Universities and student residences often require proof of vaccination – even from international pupils and students.

- **Travellers to countries where epidemics occur**, especially if they will be coming into close contact with the local population.

This is particularly relevant for:

- Disaster or development aid workers
- Member of the German Armed Forces
- Medical personnel

- **Travellers of all ages to hyperendemic regions such as the meningitis belt in Central Africa**



- **Pilgrims travelling to Saudi Arabia (Mecca)** must provide proof of **MenACWY vaccination** upon entry. This must have been at least 10 days prior to the time of entry and must not have been more than 5 years beforehand.

- **People at risk of health hazards** with immunodeficiency

- **Laboratory personnel at risk**

Do you belong to one of the groups mentioned or are you simply planning a trip? **Get advice from your doctor!**

*Matteo** also contracted meningococcus

Amputations haven't dampened his vitality

An enthusiastic sportsman, 28 years old, let's call him Matteo, with his life ahead of him when he falls ill. Initially, he has flu-like symptoms, a mild headache and fever. It isn't until later that the symptoms become more specific: the headaches become more severe and bleeding under the skin develops all over his body. **The diagnosis: meningococcal disease caused by serogroup C.**

He is not vaccinated and his body therefore has no defence against the infection. Matteo survives, but he loses both forearms and lower legs and has multiple scarring on the rest of his body. The meningococcal disease changed his life completely.

After weeks of rehabilitation, Matteo has not lost his vitality: he has resumed sports training with his prostheses and is dreaming of participating in international competitions. Matteo is very lucky to survive. However, his life could have turned out differently with a meningococcal vaccination.



* Name changed, true story.

Reimbursement of expenses

Statutory health insurance companies reimburse the expenses for all groups of people who should be vaccinated according to the STIKO recommendation. Work-related vaccinations are covered by the employer. But many health insurance companies also cover the MenACWY and MenB vaccinations for private trips abroad.

Everything you need for that can be found here:

Reimbursement
in a travel context



Application form for reim-
bursement of expenses

