

# Learn How to Protect Yourself from Meningococcal Disease

Currently, **Florida** is experiencing one of the worst outbreaks of meningococcal disease among gay and bisexual men in U.S. history. Vaccination offers the best protection. Seek immediate medical care if you develop new or concerning symptoms.

## ○ What is meningococcal disease?

Meningococcal disease is a rare, but very serious bacterial illness. It often causes long-term problems, like loss of limbs or brain damage, and can be deadly.

## ○ How does it spread?

Meningococcal bacteria are spread by respiratory droplets and throat secretions (saliva or spit). Generally, it takes close (kissing) or lengthy (living together) contact to spread them.

## ○ Who is at risk in the Florida outbreak?

Anyone can get meningococcal disease, no matter their gender, age, race, ethnicity, or sexual orientation. Since December 2021, more than 2 dozen cases and several deaths have been identified as part of this outbreak. Gay and bisexual men living in Florida or traveling to the state appear to be at highest risk.

## ○ How can I protect myself?

**Get vaccinated.** During this outbreak, CDC recommends gay and bisexual men living in Florida get a meningococcal (MenACWY) vaccine. In addition, CDC encourages gay and bisexual men who are traveling to Florida to talk to their healthcare provider about getting a MenACWY vaccine. Men who received the vaccine at least 5 years ago can get a booster for added protection.

## ○ Where can I get a MenACWY vaccine?

MenACWY vaccines are available at doctors' offices, pharmacies, and community health clinics. Vaccines are also easy to get at all Florida county health departments. Ask your healthcare provider to review your vaccine schedule and make sure you are up to date with all recommended vaccines.

## ○ Are the vaccines free?

If you have health insurance, your insurance provider should pay for your meningococcal vaccination due to the outbreak. If you don't have health insurance, you can get vaccinated for free at a county health department. In Florida, anyone can get a MenACWY vaccine at no cost at any county health department during the outbreak.

## What are the symptoms?

Meningococcal disease has two common types – meningitis and bloodstream infection. Symptoms can appear as a flu-like illness, but typically worsen very quickly.

- Fever or chills
- Headache or stiff neck
- Nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea
- Eyes being sensitive to light
- Confusion
- Fatigue (feeling tired)
- Cold hands and feet
- Severe aches or pain
- Rapid breathing
- A dark purple rash

**Be aware of any changes to your body that could possibly be meningococcal disease and trust your instincts. Seek medical attention immediately if you think you have meningococcal disease.**

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[cdc.gov/meningococcal](https://cdc.gov/meningococcal)