

February 29, 2024

Dear parents and caregivers,

As your local medical officer of health, I am writing to share important health information regarding the increase in cases of invasive meningococcal disease type B in our community. In recent months, our region has experienced three confirmed cases, with no identifiable link between them. This count is above the KFL&A region's historical average.

Invasive meningococcal disease (IMD) is a serious bacterial infection that can be life-threatening. It can infect the brain and spinal cord (meningitis), and the bloodstream (septicemia). While this infection remains relatively rare, it can progress rapidly and have severe consequences if not treated promptly. All meningococcal infections are medical emergencies. It's important to recognize the signs and symptoms of meningococcal disease and seek medical care immediately if illness is suspected.

IMD symptoms can include:

- sudden fever
- intense headache
- stiff neck
- nausea
- vomiting
- sensitivity to light
- purplish skin rash

Meningococcal bacteria spreads from person to person through close and direct contact (e.g., open mouth kissing or sharing of drinking cups, eating utensils, vapes, etc.).

In Canada, there are five main types of this bacteria: A, B, C, Y, and W. Vaccination for meningococcal C is given at one year of age and vaccination for meningococcal A, C, Y, and W-135 is provided in Grade 7. Vaccination against meningococcal B is not part of Ontario's routine publicly funded (free) immunization schedule. I encourage parents and caregivers to ensure their children are up to date with routine meningococcal vaccinations and to consider getting a meningococcal B (MenB) vaccine through private purchase for individuals from two months of age up to 25 years of age. This cost may be covered through health benefits plans.

.../2

Infants and children two months of age to 17 years of age with certain medical conditions are eligible for publicly funded (free) meningococcal B vaccine. These conditions include:

- acquired complement deficiencies (e.g., receiving eculizumab)
- asplenia, individuals without a spleen, or well-functioning spleen (functional or anatomic)
- cochlear implant recipient (pre- or post-implant)
- complement, properdin, factor D, or primary antibody deficiencies
- HIV

Please consult your health care provider to discuss vaccination options available for your child. If you do not have a health care provider, you can:

- Attend a local walk-in-clinic.
- Consider using a virtual care clinic to get a prescription and ask your pharmacist to administer the vaccine.
- Book an appointment at [kflaph.ca/appointments](https://kflaph.ca/appointments) if you have one of the medical conditions listed above.

To learn more about invasive meningococcal disease and available vaccines, speak with a health care provider or visit [caringforkids.cps.ca](https://caringforkids.cps.ca) or [kflaph.ca/IMD](https://kflaph.ca/IMD).

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. Together, we can work towards maintaining a healthy and safe community for all.

Sincerely,



Piotr Oglaza, MD, CPHI (C), MPH, CCFP, FRCPC  
Medical Officer of Health/Chief Executive Officer