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We are writing to invite you to the surgery for your MenACWY vaccine. This vaccine helps protect you against meningococcal disease which can cause meningitis (inflammation of the brain) and septicaemia (blood poisoning). These can kill in hours and those who recover may be left severely disabled.

Since 2009, there has been a large increase in group W meningococcal (MenW) disease in England, resulting in several deaths in teenagers. Older teenagers and young adults who are not vaccinated are at risk of getting MenW disease, so you need to get vaccinated to protect yourself. Vaccination helps protect you and others around you. You may have had a MenC vaccination before but you still need the MenACWY vaccine as this gives you the extra protection you need.

The vaccination is free and may save your life.

Please contact the surgery today on 01325 465285 to arrange your vaccination against this serious disease.

You may be planning to get a job or an apprenticeship, join the armed forces or go on to higher education. Whatever you do next, it is important that you get vaccinated. If you are planning to go to university you should get vaccinated well **before** you move. If this is not possible you should register with a new GP at university or your new location and arrange to get the vaccine there as soon as possible – ideally in your first week of term. New university students are at extra risk of meningococcal infection in the first weeks of term when they come into contact with many new people of a similar age.

Finally, if you are not up to date with the **MMR vaccine** which helps protect you from measles mumps and rubella you should get this at the same appointment. More information about both vaccines can be found at the NHS Choices website or through speaking to the nurse or GP in the surgery.

Annex

Meningococcal bacteria can cause meningitis (inflammation of the lining of the brain) and septicaemia (blood poisoning). Both diseases are very serious and can kill, especially if not diagnosed early. The early symptoms of meningococcal disease are similar to those of flu, so you need to be able to recognise them very quickly (even if you have been vaccinated, the vaccines offered through the routine immunisation programme do not protect against all forms of the disease). A full description of the signs and symptoms of meningitis and septicaemia can be found at www.meningitis.org and www.meningitisnow.org

Look out for any of these symptoms

Not everyone will develop these symptoms and they can appear in any order.

Fever, cold hands and feet
Vomiting and diarrhoea
Drowsiness, difficult to wake up
Irritability and/or confusion
Dislike of bright lights
Severe headache or muscle pains
Pale, blotchy skin with or without a rash
Convulsions/seizures
Stiff neck

Is the vaccine safe?

The vaccine has been used for many years across the world and has a good safety record. Serious side effects from the vaccine are rare.

Does the vaccination hurt? What are the common side effects?

It's like a sting. You may get soreness and some redness and swelling in your arm after the injection – you may also get a headache, but these symptoms should disappear after one or two days. If you feel unwell at any time after vaccination, you should contact your GP.

Do I have to receive it?

All vaccinations in the UK are voluntary but it's recommended that everybody in this age group has the MenACWY vaccine to help protect themselves and others, such as young infants, who may be particularly susceptible to this disease. You remain eligible up to your 25th birthday.

Further information

Further information about the meningitis vaccination programme can be found at the NHS Choices website: <http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/vaccinations/Pages/men-acwy-vaccine.aspx>