



UK Health  
Security  
Agency

**NHS**

A guide to the Meningococcal B vaccine  
**for protection against**  
**gonorrhoea**



**i mmunisation**

Helping to protect everyone, at every age



## **for gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men**

**From August 2025, gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men (GBMSM) who are considered at higher risk of gonorrhoea infection are being offered the meningococcal group B vaccine called 'Bexsero' to help protect them against gonorrhoea infections.**

**The vaccine will also help to prevent cases of meningitis and septicaemia caused by the meningococcal B bacteria.**

## Reducing your risk of infection

Gonorrhoea caused by the bacterium *Neisseria gonorrhoeae* is one of the most common sexually transmitted infections (STI) in the UK. GBMSM who have sex with more partners are at increased risk of contracting it. Gonorrhoea infections can also increase the risk of getting other infections and untreated gonorrhoea infection can cause serious problems including infections in the testicles and eyes.

## What is Bexsero?

Bexsero is a vaccine that helps protect against *Neisseria meningitidis* group B (MenB) bacteria, which can cause meningitis (an infection of the lining of the brain and spinal cord) and septicaemia (blood poisoning). It has been used in the UK routine immunisation programme for babies since 2015 and has led to 75% reduction in MenB infections for vaccinated groups. Recent research has shown that the Bexsero vaccine may also offer some protection against gonorrhoea.

## How does Bexsero help protect against gonorrhoea?

The meningococcus (*Neisseria meningitidis*) and the bacteria that cause gonococcus (*Neisseria gonorrhoeae*) are closely related. While Bexsero is primarily designed to protect against meningococcal infections (meningitis and septicaemia), studies have shown that the vaccine can also provide some protection against gonorrhoea. This means that individuals who receive the Bexsero vaccine may have a reduced risk of contracting gonorrhoea compared to those who are not vaccinated.

You need 2 doses of the vaccine for protection. The second dose must be given at least 4 weeks after the first dose, but can be given after 3 months, 6 months or later, whenever you next attend the clinic. The vaccine is given by injection usually in the upper arm.

It is common to get some swelling, redness or tenderness where you have the injection. You may also get a mild fever, nausea, headache or muscle aches but these symptoms should disappear after one or two days.

More serious side effects are rare. You can take over the counter pain medication such as paracetamol or ibuprofen to manage these symptoms if required.

## **How soon will I be protected?**

It takes at least 2 weeks from your second dose for your body to produce antibodies to give you a good level of protection. The vaccine gives around 30-40% protection against gonorrhoea so you must continue to use condoms for protection against gonorrhoea and other sexually transmitted infections such as syphilis.

## **Will it stop me getting gonorrhoea?**

It will not completely stop you from getting gonorrhoea infection, but it will help reduce the chance of infection and passing it on to other partners.

## **Will it stop me getting meningitis and septicaemia?**

Meningitis and septicaemia are rare but severe diseases that can kill or leave people with life changing disabilities and health problems. The vaccine protects against meningitis and septicaemia caused by the MenB bacteria but other bacteria can also cause meningitis and septicaemia so you should still be aware of the signs and symptoms.

**<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/meningitis/>**

## **Signs and symptoms**

### **► Gonorrhoea symptoms**

- Many infections may be asymptomatic
- Can include thick yellow discharge from the penis
- Pain on urination

If you are concerned about gonorrhoea infection, contact your local sexual health clinic for advice and testing.



**Find your local sexual health clinic**

**[www.nhs.uk/service-search/sexual-health/find-a-sexual-health-clinic/](https://www.nhs.uk/service-search/sexual-health/find-a-sexual-health-clinic/)**

## Don't forget your MenB vaccine record card

You will need a second dose at least 4 weeks after the first dose to give you the best protection from gonorrhoea.



**For more information on  
gonorrhoea please visit**

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**Gonorrhoea symptoms**  
from NHS.UK

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**Gonorrhoea symptoms**  
from THT.ORG.UK

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**Information on gonorrhoea  
and meningitis**  
from NHS.UK

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**Meningitis Research Foundation**  
free helpline 0808 800 3344

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**Meningitis Now**  
24 hour helpline 0808 801 0388

If you have any questions speak  
to your health care adviser.

**Confidential. No judgement.  
No shame. No stigma.**



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1P 100K JUN 2025 (APS). Product code: MGB01EN

UK Health Security Agency Gateway number: 2024367

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