

FDA expands meningitis vaccine age range

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The U.S. Food and Drug Administration has expanded the approved age range for Menactra, a bacterial meningitis vaccine.

Originally approved by the FDA in 2005 for use by people ages 11 to 55 years, it is now approved to include children ages 2 to 10 years.

Meningitis is a serious inflammation of the lining that surrounds the spinal cord and brain and can result in death or permanent injury.

Before Menactra's approval, Menomune was the only meningococcal vaccine available in the United States for use in children, ages 2 years and older. Both products are manufactured by Sanofi Pasteur Inc. of Swiftwater, Pa., and both offer protection against four groups of *Neisseria meningitidis*, the bacterium that can cause meningitis.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends meningococcal vaccination for children ages 2 to 10 years who are at increased risk of meningococcal disease, such as those whose spleen has been removed; those with a medical condition that makes it difficult to fight infection; and those who expect to travel to areas where the disease is common.

Vaccination also is used to control outbreaks of bacterial meningitis.

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