

New study to assess safety of meningitis vaccine during pregnancy

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A new study will assess the effects of the meningitis vaccine during pregnancy.
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The Connecticut Pregnancy Exposure Information Service (CPEIS), a statewide nonprofit organization based at the Health Center with affiliates across North America, is taking part in a new study that will

assess the safety of the meningitis vaccine in pregnancy. The launch coincided with World Meningitis Day on April 24.

“This is an important vaccine especially for teens and young adults,” says Sharon Voyer Lavigne, a genetic counselor and coordinator of CPEIS. “The meningitis vaccination is recommended to those ages 16 through 21 years, because this group has the highest rates of meningococcal disease. While this disease is not very common, prevention is key. Meningococcal bacteria can cause very severe illness, including meningitis and sepsis, which can result in permanent disabilities and even death.”

In addition to teens and young adults, other groups who may be at an increased risk of meningitis and are recommended to receive the vaccine include those who are living in close group quarters such as college freshmen living in a dormitory, military recruits, individuals who are traveling or residing in countries where the disease is common, and people in certain occupations or with certain kinds of immune disorders.

Exposure to the meningococcal vaccine during pregnancy has not been well studied.

“We do not have data to suggest that this vaccine would be harmful to the pregnant woman or her unborn child, but good data on its safety has not been reported,” adds Voyer Lavigne. “This highlights the importance of collecting data on pregnant women who receive the vaccination. This data will assist women and their health care providers in making the best choices for treatment and prevention in mothers and babies.”

Through evidence-based clinical information, CPEIS aims to educate women about exposures during pregnancy and breastfeeding through a toll-free phone service as well as observational research studies. The organization’s parent national non-profit, the Organization of Teratology

Information Specialists (OTIS) study group, is looking for the help of pregnant women to collect information on exposures like the meningitis vaccine in pregnancy, with a goal of enrolling pregnant women who have received the meningitis vaccine during their first few weeks of pregnancy. The study will continue through 2015.

“Anyone who’s had exposure to a [meningitis vaccine](#) within the first trimester of pregnancy is eligible to enroll,” says Diana Johnson, study manager for OTIS studies. However, even if they haven’t been exposed to the vaccine during pregnancy, [pregnant women](#) can still take part in the new study by enrolling as a comparison group participant. “Those who choose to share their [pregnancy](#) through this study will be helping to contribute to the overall published information in the future, helping a lot of future moms and babies,” explains Johnson. Participants will also receive a copy of the results of the study.

Provided by University of Connecticut

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