UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE
Safe Space Team

Check your protection against vaccine-preventable diseases before you come to Cambridge

Before you come to Cambridge, please check you have had the vaccines listed below. It is really important that students are protected against common but preventable communicable diseases, because when you arrive at Cambridge you will be living with and mixing with lots of other students. Our vaccination checklist provides a quick summary of this information.
If you have any questions relating to the information below, please contact the Communicable Disease Helpdesk via email: CD-Helpdesk@admin.cam.ac.uk or telephone: 01223 339514.

Meningococcal meningitis

Meningococcal infection is a serious illness and cases continue to occur in the UK among people of student age. It is very important that you are aware of the signs and symptoms of meningitis infection and seek medical advice urgently if you are concerned about yourself or others.
The meningitis groups (including A, B, C, W, Y) covered by vaccinations you have received before your 17th birthday will depend on your year of birth (and may be different if you grew up outside the UK). You may need to ask for an additional vaccine.

If you grew up in the UK and are of typical student age in 2024, and all of your childhood vaccinations were completed, we would expect you to have received the MenC vaccine at aged 12 months, and the MenACWY conjugate vaccine at aged 14 or 15 (Year 9).
If you were born after 1 September 1996 and missed your teenage MenACWY vaccination, you are entitled to request this vaccine, and we strongly advise that you do so before arriving in Cambridge. The vaccine is available to all new UK university entrants, including international students, up to their 25th birthday. If you are in the UK, you can take this letter to your doctor and ask for the vaccine.

If it is not possible for you to have the MenACWY vaccine before you arrive, please discuss it with your doctor or College nurse as soon as possible after your arrival. Note: if you received a MenC vaccine over the age of 10 years you should still receive MenACWY conjugate vaccine to ensure protection against the additional groups A, W and Y. The MenACWY conjugate vaccine can be administered at any interval after MenC vaccine. Further information can be found at MenACWY vaccine - NHS (www.nhs.uk)

MenB - cases of group B meningococcal infection continue to occur in the UK. Vaccination against group B meningococcal infection was added to the childhood immunisation schedule for infants in their first year of age, from 1 May 2015. You are therefore unlikely to have received this vaccine routinely and there is presently no ‘catching up’ arrangement in the UK scheme for individuals born before 2015. Be aware of the signs and symptoms and seek medical advice urgently if you are concerned about your own health or that of another student.

UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE
Safe Space Team

Mumps and measles

Mumps and measles can be serious infections. UKHSA reported a 'steady rise' in measles cases in England during recent years and declared a National Incident following an outbreak in January 2024, therefore, it is important that you check if you have been vaccinated. The MMR vaccine protects against both of these infections as well as rubella (German measles). Individuals who grew up in the UK and are now of typical student age in 2024 (17+) are likely to have received the MMR vaccine in two doses: the first aged 12-13 months, and the second aged 3 years 4 months. There can be a gap in immunity amongst 18-25 year olds as some didn't get the MMR vaccine as children. If you were not fully vaccinated as a child (two doses), we strongly recommend that you get the MMR vaccine now. Further information can be found at MMR (measles, mumps and rubella) vaccine - NHS (www.nhs.uk)

Tuberculosis (TB)

TB is a serious but curable disease. Incidence in England is higher than in many other Western European countries and is concentrated in London and other major cities. In the UK, those at most risk of developing TB include people who are close contacts of a person with infectious TB and those who have visited, lived or worked for a long time in countries with a high rate of TB. Presently, the BCG vaccine for TB is not routinely offered as part of childhood immunisation in the UK, unless certain risk factors are present. We do not expect students to have received a BCG vaccination before coming to university. You may be offered one if you are deemed to be at risk (mostly students in clinical healthcare). Further information can be found at BCG vaccine for tuberculosis (TB) overview - NHS (www.nhs.uk).

Diagnosis of active TB disease in young people can be delayed because often neither they nor their doctor consider it as a possibility. If you develop symptoms, such as a persistent cough that lasts for three weeks or more; loss of appetite; weight loss; fevers or sweating at night, you should discuss this with your doctor or College nurse.

If you are arriving from a country with a very high incidence of TB you may be invited to have a blood test to check for latent TB infection – that is, the presence of sleeping TB bacteria in the body, which may not make you feel unwell, but could develop into active TB disease in the future. Further information about latent TB can be found at Latent TB - The Truth About TB

COVID-19 and other respiratory infections

COVID-19 vaccinations in the U.K. are only available as part of seasonal vaccination programmes for individuals at increased risk of becoming seriously ill from COVID-19. You should be contacted if your medical records indicate you are eligible.

Once you are here, it is important you follow advice to keep you and others safe if you develop symptoms of a respiratory infection, which might be COVID-19. If you are at higher risk from COVID-19, please discuss this with your doctor or College nurse.

UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE
Safe Space Team

Influenza is an acute viral infection of the respiratory tract. Serious illness and death from influenza are highest among young babies, older people and those with underlying disease. If you suffer from chronic lung, heart, kidney or liver disease or have diabetes or are otherwise immunosuppressed, please discuss having the NHS flu vaccine with your doctor or College nurse. For further information see Flu vaccine - NHS (www.nhs.uk) Seasonal influenza: guidance, data and analysis - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Childhood vaccines

If you are unsure whether your childhood vaccinations are complete, please check with your health practitioner.

Registering with a doctor

If you are an international student arriving from outside the U.K., you will not have access to NHS services until you register with a doctor's surgery (also known as a General Practitioner or GP). It is very important that you register. It is free (as is most healthcare provided by the NHS) and it is usually easy to register with a doctor, but if you need advice about the process, please ask your College.

Communicable Disease Helpdesk
01223 339514
CD-Helpdesk@admin.cam.ac.uk

August 2024