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NHS urges teens to take part in meningitis B vaccine trial

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The NHS is attempting to recruit 24,000 teenagers in a bid to test the first new vaccines for adolescents against the most common form of meningitis following a public outcry.

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However, by testing them on such a large cohort they also want to establish if the drugs are capable of preventing the spread of the potentially deadly bacteria from protected to unprotected teens, thereby building ‘herd immunisation’.

In 2016 more than 400,000 people signed a petition calling for all children to be given a meningitis vaccine.

All 16 to 18-year-olds taking part in the study will receive two doses of one of the new vaccines, 8,000 in the 4CMenB (Bexsero) arm, with the same number taking MenB-fHBP (Trumbenba).

A further 8,000 will act as a control group and not be given the vaccine.

Throat swabs will be taken 12 months apart to assess to what extent they are carrying the bacteria.

Dr Matthew Snape, from the University of Oxford’s Vaccine Groups, said: “Participants will not only get a vaccine that reduces their risk of meningitis but also help us understand if we can prevent the bug being carried and potentially spread to others.”

Participants are being recruited through schools in 14 towns and cities in England, Scotland and Wales.