



ST. JOHN'S
UNIVERSITY

IMPORTANT MENINGITIS INFORMATION

OFFICE OF HEALTH SERVICES

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St. John's University is in compliance with New York State Public Health Law 2167, which requires ALL students attending colleges and universities in New York State to be given information relating to immunization against meningococcal meningitis. By law, you must respond to this notification within 30 days.

An airborne disease, meningococcal meningitis is transmitted through droplets of respiratory secretions and from direct contact with persons infected with the disease. College students spending many hours together in close physical contact and/or living in confined areas such as residence halls are at an increased risk of contracting the disease.

Meningococcal meningitis causes an inflammation of the membranes covering the brain and spinal cord. It can be treated with antibiotics but is sometimes not diagnosed early enough. Symptoms of the most common type of meningococcal meningitis are high fever, severe headache, stiff neck, nausea and vomiting, lethargy, and a rapidly progressing rash. The disease strikes about 3,000 Americans and claims about 300 lives each year. Between 100 and 125 meningitis cases occur on college campuses and as many as 15 students will die from the disease each year. Though it occurs most often in late winter or early spring, it can occur in any season.

A vaccine is available to protect against four types of the bacteria causing meningitis in the United States: types A, C, Y, and W-135. These types account for nearly two-thirds of meningitis cases among college students. The vaccine does not protect against all strains of the disease and does not provide lifelong immunity. To help you make an informed decision about being immunized, talk with your healthcare provider to consider the benefits and risks of meningococcal meningitis immunization.

Though Student Health Services does not provide the vaccine on campus, we can refer students to local healthcare providers if requested. The cost of the vaccine varies, but in our area the approximate cost varies between \$100 and \$200. Be advised that insurance may not pay for the cost of the vaccine.

For your information, we enclose a fact sheet about meningitis provided by the New York State Department of Health. After reading the fact sheet and consulting with your healthcare provider, please complete the form provided and return it to the Health Services Office. You may also fax the form to Student Health Services at 718-990-2368.

Thank you for taking the time to consider this important information about meningococcal meningitis and the available vaccine.



MENINGOCOCCAL DISEASE INFORMATION SHEET

Information for college students and parents of children at residential schools and overnight camps

What is meningococcal disease?

Meningococcal disease is caused by bacteria called *Neisseria meningitidis*. It can lead to serious blood infections. When the linings of the brain and spinal cord become inflamed, it is called meningitis. The disease strikes quickly and can have serious complications, including death.

Anyone can get meningococcal disease. Some people are at higher risk. This disease occurs more often in people who are

- Teenagers or young adults
- Infants younger than one year of age
- Living in crowded settings, such as college dormitories or military barracks
- Traveling to areas outside of the United States, such as the "meningitis belt" in Africa
- Living with a damaged spleen or no spleen
- Being treated with Soliris® or who have complement component deficiency (an inherited immune disorder)
- Exposed during an outbreak
- Working with meningococcal bacteria in a laboratory

What are the symptoms?

Symptoms appear suddenly, usually three to four days after a person is infected. It can take up to 10 days to develop symptoms.

Symptoms may include

- A sudden high fever
- Headache
- Stiff neck (meningitis)
- Nausea and vomiting
- Red-purple skin rash
- Weakness and feeling very ill
- Eyes sensitive to light

How is meningococcal disease spread?

It spreads from person-to-person by coughing or coming into close or lengthy contact with someone who is sick or who carries the bacteria. Contact includes kissing, sharing drinks, or living together. Up to one in 10 people carry meningococcal bacteria in their nose or throat without getting sick.

Is there treatment?

Early diagnosis of meningococcal disease is very important. If it is caught early, meningococcal disease can be treated with antibiotics. But, sometimes the infection has caused too much damage for antibiotics to prevent death or serious long-term problems. Most people need to be cared for in a hospital due to serious, life-threatening infections.

What are the complications?

Ten to 15 percent of those who get meningococcal disease die. Among survivors, as many as one in five will have permanent disabilities. Complications include

- Hearing loss
- Brain damage
- Kidney damage
- Limb amputations

What should I do if I or someone I love is exposed?

The vaccine is safe, with mild and infrequent side effects, such as redness and pain at the injection site lasting up to two days.



MENINGOCOCCAL DISEASE INFORMATION SHEET *(continued)*

Information for college students and parents of children at residential schools and overnight camps

What is the best way to prevent meningococcal disease?

The single best way to prevent this disease is to be vaccinated. Vaccines are available for people six weeks of age and older.

Various vaccines offer protection against the five major strains of bacteria that cause meningococcal disease:

- All teenagers should receive two doses of vaccine against strains A, C, W, and Y. The first dose is given at 11 to 12 years of age, and the second dose (booster) at age 16.
- It is very important that teens receive the booster dose at age 16 in order to protect them through the years when they are at greatest risk of meningococcal disease.
- Talk to your healthcare provider today if your teen has not received two doses of vaccine against meningococcal strains A, C, W, and Y.
- Teens and young adults can also be vaccinated against the "B" strain. Talk to your healthcare provider about whether they recommend vaccine against the "B" strain.

Others who should receive the vaccine include

- Infants, children, and adults with certain medical conditions
- People exposed during an outbreak
- Travelers to the "meningitis belt" of sub-Saharan Africa
- Military recruits

Please speak with your healthcare provider if you may be at increased risk.

What are the meningococcal vaccine requirements for school attendance?

As of September 1, 2016, children entering grades 7 and 12 must be immunized against meningococcal disease strains A, C, W, and Y according to the recommendations listed above.

Is there an increased risk for meningococcal disease if I travel?

- Meningococcal disease and outbreaks occur in the United States and around the world. The disease is more common in the "meningitis belt" of sub-Saharan Africa. The risk is highest in people who visit these countries and who have prolonged contact with local populations during an epidemic.
- To reduce your risk of illness, wash your hands often, maintain healthy habits such as getting plenty of rest, and try not to come into contact with people who are sick.

Travel and meningococcal disease:

wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/diseases/meningococcal-disease

Learn more about meningococcal disease:

www.cdc.gov/meningococcal/

For more information about vaccine-preventable diseases:

www.health.ny.gov/prevention/immunization/

Meningococcal Disease Fact Sheet, New York State Department of Health 2/2016