

# 2012-2013 MENINGOCOCCAL DISEASE AND VACCINE

The following information is based on information from the California Department of Health Services and the Center for Disease Control. Please read it carefully and consult with your health care provider (or student health service) if you have any questions.

## Do You Know About Meningococcal Disease?

Meningococcal disease is a serious illness caused by bacteria that infect the blood or membranes surrounding the brain and spinal cord. It can lead to brain damage, disability, and death.

It is common in infants and in people with certain medical conditions. College freshmen, particularly those who live in dorms, have a modestly increased risk of getting the disease. About 100 cases occur on college campuses in the U.S. each year, with 5-15 deaths.

Common symptoms of meningitis include stiff neck, headache, fever, sensitivity to light, sleepiness, confusion, and seizures.

It can be treated with antibiotics, but treatment must be started early. Despite treatment, 10-15% of people who get the disease die from it. Up to 11-19% suffer long-term consequences.

## Is There a Vaccination for Meningococcal Disease?

There are two meningococcal vaccines available in the U.S. – Meningococcal polysaccharide vaccine (MPSV4) and the Meningococcal conjugate vaccine (MCV4). Both vaccines can prevent 4 types of meningococcal disease, including 2 of the 3 types most common in the U.S. and a type that causes epidemics in Africa. Meningococcal vaccines cannot prevent all types of the disease. The recently approved vaccine (Menactra™) offers longer protection than previous vaccines, consists of a single injection and can prevent 50-70% of cases on college campuses. These vaccines are available from your doctor or college health service.

Meningococcal vaccine may cause reactions such as pain or fever. Discuss contraindications and rare but serious side effects with your health care provider.

Before you start College, make sure you are up-to-date on all your immunizations: measles, mumps, rubella; tetanus, diphtheria; varicella; and hepatitis B. Colleges and universities may require them for admission or enrollment.

## For more information check the following websites:

<http://www.cdc.gov/meningitis/about/faq.html>

<http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/pubs/vis/default.htm#mening>

[www.cdph.ca.gov/HealthInfo/discond/Pages/MeningococcalDisease.aspx](http://www.cdph.ca.gov/HealthInfo/discond/Pages/MeningococcalDisease.aspx)

## What Is Meningococcal Disease?

Meningococcal disease is caused by *Neisseria meningitidis* bacteria. The two most common forms of meningococcal disease are meningitis, a bacterial infection of the fluid and covering of the spinal cord and brain; or septicemia, an infection of the

bloodstream. Meningitis has other causes as well, the most common being viral infection.

## How Common Is Meningococcal Disease?

Meningococcal disease is uncommon. In the U.S., each year there are about 1000-3000 cases. Of 16 million students enrolled in colleges nationwide, approximately 100 acquire meningococcal disease each year.

## How Is It Diagnosed?

A diagnosis is commonly made by growing the bacteria from the spinal fluid or blood. Identifying the bacteria is important for selecting the best antibiotics.

## Are College Students At Increased Risk?

College freshmen living in dormitories are at a slightly increased risk of meningococcal meningitis. Many states have enacted legislation requiring that entering residential freshmen students receive information on meningococcal disease and prevention.

## How Are Meningococcal Bacteria Spread?

The bacteria are transmitted from person-to-person in secretions from the nose and throat. They are not spread by casual contact or by simply breathing the air near an infected person, but require close contact. The bacteria can live outside the body for only a few minutes; so if the germs contaminate a desk or book, they soon die and won't infect a person who touches it later.

As many as 1 in 10 people carry the bacteria in the back of the nose and throat at any given time, especially in the winter. Why only a very small number of those who have the bacteria in their nose and throat develop the disease, while others remain healthy, is not understood.

## How Can I Avoid Getting Meningococcal Disease?

You can protect yourself by maintaining good health and hygiene. As a general recommendation, you should wash your hands frequently. Avoid sharing materials that make mouth contact, such as eating utensils, bottles, cigarettes, or lip balm. Contact a healthcare provider immediately if you are in close contact with someone who is known or suspected to have meningococcal infection.

## Is Vaccination Recommended For College Students?

Meningococcal vaccination is recommended for college freshmen living in dormitories who would like to reduce their risk for meningococcal disease. It is recommended for persons at above average risk for meningococcal disease, including persons with certain immune system problems, those lacking a spleen, military recruits, and travelers to countries where meningococcal disease is common. Discuss the risks and benefits of vaccination with your health care provider.

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*In accordance with California State University policy CSU Stanislaus is required to provide all incoming freshman residents with information on Meningococcal Disease. By checking the box relating to this on the housing application you are confirming that you have read the information provided about Meningococcal Disease. You will also be asked to check a box on the application indicating your intention to get vaccinated prior to check-in. Please note that this vaccination is not required, only recommended.*