

The American College Health Association recommends that college students, especially freshmen living in residence halls, seriously consider receiving vaccination against potentially fatal bacterial forms of meningococcal disease. Details are listed below. Please call the Student Health Center at 448-8686 if you have any questions.

Important Information about Bacterial Meningitis

Bacterial Meningitis is a serious, potentially deadly disease that can progress extremely fast. It is an inflammation of the membranes that surround the brain and spinal cord. The bacteria that causes meningitis can also infect the blood. This disease strikes about 3,000 Americans each year, including 100-125 on college campuses, leading to 5-15 deaths among college students every year. There is treatment, but those who survive may develop severe health problems or disabilities.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS?

- High fever
- Rash or purple patches on skin
- Light sensitivity
- Confusion and sleepiness
- Lethargy
- Severe headache
- Vomiting
- Stiff neck
- Nausea
- Seizures

There may be a rash of tiny, red-purple spots caused by bleeding under the skin. These can occur anywhere on the body.

The more symptoms, the higher the risk, so if these symptoms appear seek immediate medical attention.

HOW IS BACTERIAL MENINGITIS DIAGNOSED?

- Diagnosis is made by a medical provider and is usually based on a combination of clinical symptoms and laboratory results from spinal fluid and blood tests.
- **Early diagnosis and treatment can greatly improve the likelihood of recovery.**

HOW IS THE DISEASE TRANSMITTED?

- The disease is transmitted when people exchange saliva (such as by kissing, or by sharing drinking containers, utensils, cigarettes, toothbrushes, etc.) or come in contact with respiratory or throat secretions.

HOW DO YOU INCREASE YOUR RISK OF GETTING BACTERIAL MENINGITIS?

- Exposure to saliva by sharing cigarettes, water bottles, eating utensils, food, kissing, etc.
- Living in close conditions (such as sharing a room/suite in a dorm or group home).

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE CONSEQUENCES OF THE DISEASE?

- Death (*in 8 to 24 hours from perfectly well to dead*)
- Permanent brain damage
- Kidney failure
- Learning disability
- Hearing loss, blindness
- Limb damage (fingers, toes, arms, legs) that may require amputation
- Gangrene

- Coma
- Convulsions

CAN THE DISEASE BE TREATED?

- Antibiotic treatment, if given early, can increase chances of recovery. However, permanent disability or death can still occur.
- Vaccinations are available and should be considered for:
 - Those living in close quarters
 - College students 25 years old or younger (older students may opt for immunization too)
- Vaccination is effective against 4 of the 5 most common bacterial types that cause 70% of the disease in the U.S. (but does not protect against all types of meningitis).
- Vaccinations take 7-10 days to become effective, with protection lasting 3-5 years.
- Vaccination is very safe – most common side effects are redness and minor pain at injection site for up to two days.
- **Vaccination is available to all students for \$90 by appointment at the Student Health Center (512-448-8686).**

HOW CAN I FIND OUT MORE INFORMATION?

- Contact your own health care provider.
- Contact your Student Health Center at (512) 448-8686.
- Contact your local or regional Texas Department of Health office.
- Contact web sites: www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dbmd/diseaseinfo; www.acha.org
- Contact National Meningitis Association (www.nmaus.org) to locate providers in your local area that administer meningitis vaccine