



## What college students should know about **Meningococcal Disease**

### **Q. What is meningococcal disease?**

A. Meningococcal disease is a potentially life-threatening bacterial infection caused by *Neisseria meningitidis*, a common bacterium. Sometimes these bacteria invade the body to infect the lining of the brain (causing meningitis) or the bloodstream (meningococemia). This invasive disease is sometimes fatal unless recognized and treated promptly. Brain damage, hearing loss, loss of limbs, or kidney failure can also occur. Meningococcal disease is relatively rare, occurring at a rate of less than 1 in 100,000 people in the United States.

### **Q. Who is at risk for meningococcal disease?**

A. Everyone is potentially at risk, but college freshmen living in dormitories have an increased risk of developing meningococcal disease compared with other college students. For this reason, it is important for students to become familiar with meningococcal disease and get vaccinated against it before they come to college.

### **Q. How is meningococcal disease spread?**

A. Many people carry the bacteria in their throat or nose in a harmless state without developing an illness. Meningococcal bacteria are spread by direct contact with an infected person's oral or nasal secretions (for example, saliva or droplets from sneezing). The infection is not spread through the air, in food or water, or by casual contact in classrooms, restaurants, bars, or other social settings.

### **Q. What are the symptoms of meningococcal disease?**

A. Meningococcal disease can cause an individual to become very ill, very quickly. The most common symptoms include high fever (>101°F) accompanied by severe headache, neck stiffness, and confusion. Vomiting or rashes may also occur. Anyone with these symptoms should contact a health care provider or go to an emergency room immediately. If not treated immediately, the disease can progress rapidly and can lead to shock and death within a few hours.

### **Q. How can meningococcal disease be prevented?**

A. A vaccine is available that offers protection against some, but not all, strains of the bacteria. Immunization will reduce the overall risk of developing invasive meningococcal disease by about 65%.

### **Q. Who should get vaccinated?**

A. Meningococcal vaccine is recommended for all adolescents 11 through 18 years of age. It is also recommended for first-year college students living in a residence hall, if they have not been previously immunized. Other college students age 21 and under who want to reduce their risk of meningococcal disease may also get the vaccine.

New recommendations about booster doses were issued in 2010. If you received meningococcal vaccine before age 16, you should get a booster dose before you start college. UHS recommends that all current students age 21 and under get a booster dose of meningococcal vaccine if their first dose was given before age 16. If vaccine was given at age 16 or later, no booster is required.

In addition, meningococcal vaccine is recommended for persons traveling to countries where meningococcal disease is more common. Persons who have had their spleen removed or who have complement deficiency (an immune disorder) should get booster doses of the vaccine every five years.

### **Q. What are the benefits and limitations of the vaccine?**

A. The current meningococcal vaccine is about 90% effective in preventing meningococcal disease caused by four common strains of the bacteria. Unfortunately, about 30% of cases in college students are caused by a strain (serogroup B) that is not included in any vaccine. This vaccine does not provide any protection against other types of bacterial or viral meningitis. Immunized students must be aware that they can still develop meningococcal disease, as the vaccine provides only partial protection.

### **Q. When and where can I get vaccinated?**

A. New students should get the vaccine before arriving on campus in the fall. The vaccine is available from your family health care provider and is also available at UHS for a fee. Students can call (608) 265-5600 to schedule an appointment to receive the vaccine.

### **Q. Where can I find more information?**

A. Additional information about meningococcal disease and the vaccine is available on our website.

***To comply with Wisconsin law [SS 36.25(46)], students who live in a residence hall must report whether or not they have received vaccinations against meningococcal disease and hepatitis B. You can fulfill this requirement by completing your online Immunization and Health History Form at MyUHS. To sign up for your account, go to [www.uhs.wisc.edu](http://www.uhs.wisc.edu) and click on MyUHS.***



## What college students should know about **Hepatitis B Virus (HBV)**

### **Q. What is hepatitis B?**

A. Hepatitis B is a serious disease caused by a virus that attacks the liver. About half the people who get hepatitis B infection develop symptoms such as fatigue, nausea, loss of appetite, and jaundice (yellowing of the skin). While most people recover from the infection, some may develop lifelong infection that can lead to cirrhosis (scarring) of the liver, liver cancer, liver failure, and death. Each year, about 40,000 persons in the United States get infected with HBV. People of all ages get HBV, but it is more common in young adults.

### **Q. How is the hepatitis B virus spread?**

A. HBV is spread by direct contact with the blood or bodily fluids of an infected person. For example, you can become infected by having unprotected sex or sharing needles with an infected person. A baby can get HBV from an infected mother during childbirth. Other ways the virus is spread include receiving tattoos or body piercings using nonsterile equipment, and sharing items such as razors, piercing jewelry, and toothbrushes.

HBV is not spread through food or water or by casual contact.

### **Q. Who is at risk for HBV?**

A. Your risk is higher if you have multiple sexual partners or are a man who has sex with men, if you live in the same household with someone who has HBV infection, if you have a job or coursework that involves contact with blood or body fluids, if you work in a home for the developmentally disabled, if you have hemophilia, if you inject drugs, or if you travel to areas where HBV is common.

Your risk is also higher if you or your parents were born in Southeast Asia, Africa, the Amazon basin in South America, the Pacific Islands, or the Middle East.

### **Q. How can HBV be prevented?**

A. Hepatitis B vaccine is the best protection against HBV and is recommended by leading medical and public health organizations. There is no cure for HBV infection: that is why prevention is so important.

### **Q. Who should get vaccinated?**

A. Vaccination is recommended for everyone 18 or younger. Persons of any age whose behavior puts them at higher risk for HBV infection should also get the vaccine. Most incoming college students will have already had the vaccine series in childhood. In many states, HBV vaccine is now a requirement for entrance into school.

### **Q. What are the benefits of the vaccine?**

A. The hepatitis B vaccine prevents HBV and its serious consequences, such as liver cancer. The vaccine can also help prevent cirrhosis of the liver, a common problem for people infected with chronic HBV. The hepatitis B vaccine is safe and effective for infants, children, and adults.

### **Q. What else should I know about the vaccine?**

A. The best time to get the vaccine is before arriving on campus in the fall. The vaccine is available from your family health care provider and is also available at UHS for a fee. Students can call UHS at (608) 265-5600 to schedule an appointment to receive the vaccine.

Three doses are needed for complete protection. There is a minimum interval between the three shots, but it is never too late to complete the total of three, so there is no reason to start over. If you received the first or second dose at home, you can complete the series after you come to school. Students may prefer to finish the series at home during Thanksgiving or winter break, especially if it is covered by insurance. At the present time, additional booster doses are not recommended for persons with normal immune systems.

As with most vaccines, mild soreness may occur in the arm where the shot was given. Serious problems such as allergic reactions are very rare.

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