

## MENINGITIS INFORMATION

**IMPORTANT: Please read and sign in appropriate area on bottom of this page.**

Effective June 1, 2000, Maryland law requires that an individual enrolled in an institution of higher education in Maryland who resides in on-campus student housing must be vaccinated against meningococcal disease.

College students are at increased risk for meningococcal disease, a potentially fatal bacterial infection commonly referred to as meningitis. In fact, students living in residence halls are found to have a six-fold increased risk for the disease. The American College Health Association, the American Academy of Pediatrics and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices recommends that college students, living in residence halls, learn more about meningitis and vaccination. At least 70% of all cases of meningococcal disease in college students are vaccine preventable.

- **What is meningococcal meningitis?** Meningitis is rare. But when it strikes, this potentially fatal bacterial disease can lead to swelling of fluid surrounding the brain and spinal column as well as severe and permanent disabilities, such as hearing loss, brain damage, seizures, limb amputation and even death.
- **How is it spread?** Meningococcal meningitis is spread through the air via respiratory secretions or close contact with an infected person. This can include coughing, sneezing, kissing or sharing items like utensils, cigarettes and drinking glasses.
- **What are the symptoms?** Symptoms of meningococcal meningitis often resemble the flu and can include high fever, severe headache, stiff neck, rash, nausea, vomiting, lethargy and confusion.
- **Who is at risk?** Certain college students, particularly students who live in residence halls, have been found to have an increased risk for meningococcal meningitis. All other students should consider the vaccine as well to reduce their risk for the disease.
- **Can meningitis be prevented?** Yes. A safe and effective vaccine is available to protect against four of the five most common strains of the disease. The vaccine provides protection for approximately three to five years. Adverse reactions to the meningitis vaccine are mild and infrequent, consisting primarily of redness and pain at the injection site and rarely a fever. As with any vaccine, vaccination against meningitis may not protect 100 percent of all susceptible individuals. It does not protect against viral meningitis.
- **For more information:** To learn more about meningitis and the vaccine, you can visit the websites of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), [www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dbmd/diseaseinfo](http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dbmd/diseaseinfo), and the American College Health Association, [www.acha.org](http://www.acha.org).

**PLEASE CHECK THE STATEMENT THAT APPLIES, SIGN AND RETURN TO HEALTH SERVICES:**

I have received the meningitis vaccine (Must be documented on immunizations, Page 3)

I have read and understand the information about meningitis, and I decline the meningitis vaccine at this time. I understand that I can decide to obtain the vaccine in the future.

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Student's signature (if 18 years of age and over)

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Date

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Parent's signature (if student is under 18 years of age)

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(Please Print Name)

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(Please Print Name)