



MENINGOCOCCAL DISEASE & VACCINATION FACT SHEET

Q. WHAT IS MENINGOCOCCAL DISEASE (MENINGITIS)?

A. Meningococcal disease is a severe bacterial infection of the thin lining covering the brain and spinal cord & can cause blood infections. It is spread through direct contact with an infected person; direct contact can be intimate contact such as kissing, sharing items such as cigarettes or drinking glasses, or engaging in certain social behaviors that increase your risk for exposure.

Anyone can get meningococcal disease, but infants under 12 months, people 16-21 years, people with a compromised immune system & other medical conditions, and college freshmen living in dorms are at an increased risk of infection. About 1,000-1,200 people get meningococcal disease each year in the U.S. Even with antibiotic treatment, 10-15% of people infected die; of those who live, 11-19% lose limbs, become deaf, suffer nervous system issues, and brain damage.

Q. WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS?

A. Symptoms may include *fever, severe headache, stiff neck, rash, nausea, vomiting, and fatigue*; may *appear two to 10 days after exposure*, but usually within five days and resemble the flu. The disease progresses very rapidly, in as little as 12 hours, and students are urged to *seek medical care immediately* if they experience *two or more* of these symptoms concurrently.

Q. IS THERE A VACCINE TO PREVENT MENINGOCOCCAL DISEASE?

A. There are two kinds of meningococcal vaccine in the U.S., **MCV4 (Menactra)** – which is the preferred vaccine for people 55 years of age and younger. **MPSV4 (Menomune, Menveo)** – has been available since the 1970s. Is only given if MCV4 is unavailable and is only licensed for people older than 55 years. Both vaccines can prevent 4 types of meningococcal disease.

Q. WHO SHOULD GET THE MENINGOCOCCAL VACCINE & WHEN?

A. Routine vaccination includes 2 doses of MCV4 for adolescents (ages 11-18) and 3 doses: 2 doses 2 months apart and a booster for adolescents with special cases. The vaccine is strongly recommended for college freshmen living in the dorms, U.S. military recruits, anyone traveling to/from an area with a high incidence of meningitis (i.e. certain parts of Africa), anyone with an immune system disorder and/or damaged spleen, and anyone who may have been exposed during a meningitis outbreak.

Q. IS THE VACCINE SAFE? ARE THERE ADVERSE SIDE EFFECTS TO THE VACCINE?

A. The vaccine is very safe and adverse reactions are mild and infrequent, consisting primarily of redness and pain at the site of injection lasting up to two days.

For serious allergic reactions, look for very high fevers or behavior changes, hives, swelling of the face and throat, difficulty breathing, fast heartbeat, dizziness, and weakness. Typically this may set in within minutes of vaccination and may occur hours after. If a severe allergic reaction presents itself, call 9-1-1 or get to the nearest hospital.

Q. WHAT IS THE DURATION OF PROTECTION?

A. The duration of the meningococcal vaccine's efficacy is *approximately five (5) years*.

Q. WHERE CAN I GET MORE INFORMATION?

A. You can ask your doctor, call your local or state health department, or contact the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) at **1-800-232-4636 (1-800-CDC-INFO)** or visit the CDC's website at **www.cdc.gov/vaccines**