

ABOUT MENINGITIS

MENINGOCOCCAL VACCINE PRE-ORDER/PRE-PAY FORM ON BACK

WHAT IS MENINGITIS?

Meningitis is an **inflammation and infection of the lining of the brain and spinal cord** caused by either a virus or bacteria.

Viral Meningitis is more common than bacterial meningitis and usually occurs in late spring and summer. Signs and symptoms of viral meningitis may include stiff neck, headache, nausea, vomiting and rash. Most cases of viral meningitis run a short, uneventful course. Since the causative agent is a virus, antibiotics are not effective. Persons who have had contact with an individual with viral meningitis do not require any treatment.

Bacterial Meningitis occurs rarely and sporadically throughout the year, although outbreaks tend to occur in late winter and early spring. Bacterial meningitis in college aged students may be due to an organism called meningococcal bacteria. Because meningococcal meningitis can cause grave illness and rapidly progress to death, it requires early diagnosis and treatment. Persons who have had intimate contact with someone who has been diagnosed with meningococcal meningitis should seek medical attention so they may get prophylactic therapy, which is a course of antibiotics. Untreated meningococcal meningitis can be fatal.

WHERE DOES IT COME FROM AND HOW IS IT TRANSMITTED?

The meningococcal bacterial is found in **nasal and oral secretions**. People may harbor this organism, but never become ill, others get quite ill with meningitis. This organism can be transmitted through close personal contact such as:

- Sharing drinking utensils (cup, bottle, glass, can, jug)
- Sharing the mouthpiece of a musical instrument
- Sneezing or coughing on someone
- Kissing on the lips
- Sharing eating utensils
- Sharing lipstick or chapstick
- Sharing cigarettes, cigars or pipes

Most people who become infected simply carry the organism harmlessly, without illness, and eliminate it from the nose and throat within a short time by developing natural immunity. At any one time, up to 10% of the normal population may be found carrying meningococcus without illness or symptoms.

WHO IS AT RISK TO DEVELOP MENINGITIS?

Even though college students are at no greater risk of contacting meningitis than other 18 to 22 year olds, **the rate of infection is higher among freshman, especially freshman that live in dormitories.** Also, drinking and smoking have been linked to meningococcal disease in some studies. Alcohol and tobacco can suppress the immune system. Students may expose themselves to the bacteria by sharing glasses and cigarettes in crowded bars or parties.

WHAT ARE THE SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OR MENINGITIS?

The symptoms are often mistaken for those of the flu: **high fever, severe headache and stiff neck** may develop. Other symptoms can include **nausea/vomiting, rash, lethargy or change of consciousness.** If you experience these symptoms, you should seek immediate medical attention.

PREVENTATIVE MEASURES

- Avoid contact with the nasal and oral secretions of others
- Wash your hands frequently
- Get lots of sleep, exercise, and good nutrition, which will boost your immune system.
- If you drink, do so responsibly and in moderation. *Excessive alcohol consumption is believed by some health authorities to increase susceptibility to meningococcal meningitis.*

VACCINE

The American College Health Association recommends that *all* college students under the age of 30 become knowledgeable about the vaccine and consider getting vaccinated against meningococcal disease. The vaccine protects against four serotypes (subtypes) of meningitis, however 33% of all reported cases of meningitis are caused by a serotype which the vaccine does not protect against, according the Division of Epidemiology, PA Department of Health. If a patient who has had the vaccine is exposed to meningococcal meningitis, the experts recommend that the exposed person still have antibiotics to protect them against the disease despite the vaccine.



HOW CAN A STUDENT GET THE MENINGITIS VACCINE?

MENINGOCOCCAL VACCINE PRE-ORDER/PRE-PAY PROGRAM

Students may pre-order/pre-pay for the Meningitis Vaccine (Menaetra). The cost is \$110.00. By prepaying you are guaranteed a reserved dose to be given at the Student Health Center as soon as possible after arriving on campus. Please call to schedule an appointment at 610- 660-1175 and mark it on your calendar.

Method of payment (to "Saint Joseph's University"): Check Money Order
Receipt available for insurance reimbursement.

I understand that by pre-ordering/ pre-paying for the meningococcal vaccine, a dose will be reserved for me. I also understand that I must make an appointment at Student Health Center to receive this vaccine.

Student's name _____ SJU ID # _____

Student's Signature _____ Cell Number _____

If student is under 18, parent/guardian's signature _____ Date _____