

IMPORTANT Meningococcal Vaccine Information

In accordance with KRS 164 all educational institutions with residential campuses are required provide information on meningococcal disease to full-time students living in student housing. These students are required to indicate if they have received the meningococcal disease vaccine.

What is meningococcal meningitis?

Meningococcal disease, which includes meningitis, is a serious bacterial infection that strikes between 1000 and 2600 Americans each year. Although rare, meningococcal disease can cause meningitis (swelling of the brain or spinal cord) or meningococemia (blood infection). Vaccination has been available for decades and is a safe and effective way to help protect against this potentially devastating disease.

Who is at greatest risk for getting meningococcal meningitis?

Freshmen college students living in dormitories have been shown to be at increased risk of developing bacterial meningitis. Other high risk groups include infants, travelers to places where meningococcal disease is common (e.g., certain countries in Africa and Saudi Arabia), people with damaged (sickle cell disease) or missing spleens, and people with certain blood diseases. Other factors which may increase your risk for meningococcal meningitis include: recent viral infection, living in a crowded household, -having an underlying chronic illness, being exposed to cigarette smoke (either directly or second-hand smoke) and living in dormitories (freshman college students and military recruits).

How does meningococcal disease spread?

The disease is spread person-to-person through the exchange of respiratory and throat secretions (e.g., by coughing, kissing, or sharing eating utensils or glasses). Meningococcal bacteria can't live for more than a few minutes outside the body, so the disease is not spread as easily as the common cold or influenza.

What are symptoms of meningococcal meningitis?

Meningococcal meningitis can be hard to recognize, especially in its early stages, because symptoms are similar to those of more common viral illnesses. But unlike more common illnesses, the disease can progress quickly and may cause death within 24 hours. Symptoms may include high fever, severe headache, stiff neck, confusion, vomiting, exhaustion, and/or a rash.

What can happen if you get meningococcal meningitis?

Although rare, meningococcal meningitis is serious and can spread rapidly leading to death in an otherwise healthy young person within 24 hours. About 10 percent of people who get meningococcal meningitis will die. Up to 1 in 5 survivors are left with serious

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medical problems, including: amputation of arms, legs, fingers, and toes, brain damage, deafness or kidney damage

How can you keep from developing meningococcal meningitis?

Vaccination is safe and effective and the best way to help protect preteens and teens from meningococcal meningitis. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and other leading medical groups recommend meningococcal vaccine for:

- Children and adolescents 11 through 18 years of age
- College freshmen living in dormitories
- Children 2 through 10 years of age who are at increased risk

Are booster doses needed following initial vaccination?

Most children should have received their first dose of vaccine at ages 11 through 12 years and booster dose at age 16. You should get a booster dose after age 16. Young adults ages 19 through 21 years who are living in on-campus housing should get a booster dose if their previous dose was given before age 16 years.

How effective is this vaccine?

The MPSV4 vaccine is 85 percent to 100 percent effective

at preventing infection from the subtypes of meningococcus found in the vaccine (A, C, Y, and W-135). However, the vaccine does not protect against serogroup B meningococcus.

Can the meningitis vaccine cause meningococcal disease?

No. Only the *Neisseria meningitidis* bacterium can cause meningococcal disease. The vaccine contains only a part of the bacterium's cell wall.

For more information:

Meningitis Vaccine Information--- www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vpd-vac/mening/default.htm

General information about all types of meningitis --- www.cdc.gov/meningitis/index.html