

# Meningococcal Disease Information Sheet

Information for College Students and Parents of Children  
at Residential Schools and Overnight Camps

## **What is meningococcal disease?**

Meningococcal disease is a severe bacterial infection of the bloodstream or meninges (a thin lining covering the brain and spinal cord).

## **Who gets meningococcal disease?**

Anyone can get meningococcal disease, but it is more common in infants and children. For some college students, such as freshmen living in dormitories, there is an increased risk of meningococcal disease. Between 100 and 125 cases of meningococcal disease occur on college campuses every year in the United States; between five and 15 college students die each year as result of infection.

Currently, no data are available regarding whether children at overnight camps or residential schools are at the same increased risk for disease. However, these children can be in settings similar to college freshmen living in dormitories. Other persons at increased risk include household contacts of a person known to have had this disease, immuno-compromised people and people traveling to parts of the world where meningitis is prevalent.

## **How is the meningococcus germ spread?**

The meningococcus germ is spread by direct close contact with nose or throat discharges of an infected person. Many people carry this particular germ in their nose and throat without any signs of illness, while others may develop serious symptoms.

## **What are the symptoms?**

High fever, headache, vomiting, stiff neck and a rash are symptoms of meningococcal disease. Among people who develop meningococcal disease, 10-15% die, in spite of treatment with antibiotics. Of those who live, permanent brain damage, hearing loss, kidney failure, loss of arms or legs, or chronic nervous system problems can occur.

## **How soon do the symptoms appear?**

The symptoms may appear two to 10 days after exposure, but usually within five days.

## **What is the treatment for meningococcal disease?**

Antibiotics, such as penicillin G or ceftriaxone, can be used to treat people with meningococcal disease.

## **Is there a vaccine to prevent meningococcal meningitis?**

Yes, a safe and effective vaccine is available. The vaccine is 85% to 100% effective in preventing four kinds of bacteria (serogroups A, C, Y, W-135) that cause about 70% of the disease in the United States.

## **Is the vaccine safe? Are there adverse side effects to the vaccine?**

The vaccine is safe, with mild and infrequent side effects, such as redness and pain at the injection site lasting up to two days.

## **What is the duration of protection from the vaccine?**

After vaccination, immunity develops within seven to 10 days and remains effective for approximately three to five years. As with any vaccine, vaccination against meningitis may not protect 100% of all susceptible individuals.

## **How do I get more information about meningococcal disease and vaccination?**

Contact your family physician or your student health service. Additional information is also available on the web sites of the New York State Department of Health, [www.health.state.ny.us](http://www.health.state.ny.us); the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [www.cdc.gov/ncid/dbmd/diseaseinfo](http://www.cdc.gov/ncid/dbmd/diseaseinfo); and the American College Health Association, [www.acha.org](http://www.acha.org).

Bureau of Communicable Disease Control,  
New York State Department of Health



# Meningitis Form

(Please retain a copy for your files.)

**CONFIDENTIAL**

## Office of Health Services

Queens and Manhattan Campuses  
8000 Utopia Parkway  
Queens, NY 11439  
Tel (718) 990-6360  
Fax (718) 990-2368  
www.stjohns.edu

Staten Island Campus  
Campus Center  
300 Howard Avenue  
Staten Island, NY 10301  
Tel (718) 390-4447  
Fax (718) 390-4480

**Please print.**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Student ID Number: \_\_\_\_\_

St. John's University is in compliance with New York State Public Health Law 2167, requiring all college and university students and parents or guardians (if student is under age 18) to complete and return this form to the Office of Health Services at the address above.

**All students (and parents or guardians if student is under age 18) must complete and sign below.**

**Please note: It is necessary to complete this form even if documentation of this vaccine is already on file.**

### CHECK ONE BOX AND SIGN BELOW:

I have (for students under age 18: "My child has"):

☐ Had the meningococcal meningitis vaccine. Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Health Care Provider's signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

License # : \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Stamp: \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Read, or have had explained to me, the information regarding meningococcal meningitis disease. I understand the risks of not receiving the vaccine. I have decided that I (my child) will not obtain immunization against meningococcal meningitis disease.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(Parent / guardian if student is under age 18)



# Important Meningitis Information

St. John's University is in compliance with New York State Public Health Law 2167, which requires ALL students attending colleges and universities in New York State to be given information relating to immunization against meningococcal meningitis. By law you must respond to this notification within 30 days.

An air-borne disease, meningococcal meningitis is transmitted through droplets of respiratory secretions and from direct contact with persons infected with the disease. College students spending many hours together in close physical contact and/or living in confined areas such as residence halls are at an increased risk of contracting the disease.

Meningococcal meningitis causes an inflammation of the membranes covering the brain and spinal cord. It can be treated with antibiotics but is sometimes not diagnosed early enough. Symptoms of the most common type of meningococcal meningitis are high fever, severe headache, stiff neck, nausea and vomiting, lethargy and a rapidly progressing rash. The disease strikes about 3,000 Americans and claims about 300 lives each year. Between 100 and 125 meningitis cases occur on college campuses, and as many as 15 students will die from the disease. Though it occurs most often in late winter or early spring, it can occur in any season.

A vaccine is available to protect against four types of the bacteria causing meningitis in the United States – types A, C, Y and W-135. These types account for nearly two-thirds of meningitis cases among college students. The vaccine does not protect against all strains of the disease and does not provide lifelong immunity. To help you make an informed decision about being immunized, talk with your health care provider to consider the benefits and risks of meningococcal meningitis immunization.

Though the University Health Service does not provide the vaccine on campus, we can refer students to local health care providers if requested. The cost of the vaccine varies, but in our area the approximate cost is about \$100 - \$200. Be advised that insurance may not pay for the cost of the vaccine.

For your information, we enclose a fact sheet about meningitis provided by the New York State Department of Health. After reading the fact sheet and consulting with your health care provider, please complete the form we provide and return it to this office. You may also fax the form to the number provided.

Thank you for taking the time to consider this important information about meningococcal meningitis and the available vaccine.