

Meningococcal Meningitis

Don't Wait.
Vaccinate.

There is a rare but sometimes deadly disease, called meningococcal meningitis, that strikes adolescents and young adults.

The disease spreads quickly and within hours of the first symptoms can cause organ failure, brain damage, amputations of limbs, or death.

Parents and their adolescent and college-bound children should learn more about meningococcal meningitis and prevention. Vaccination can prevent most cases of the disease.

Talk to Your Doctor About Meningitis Vaccination

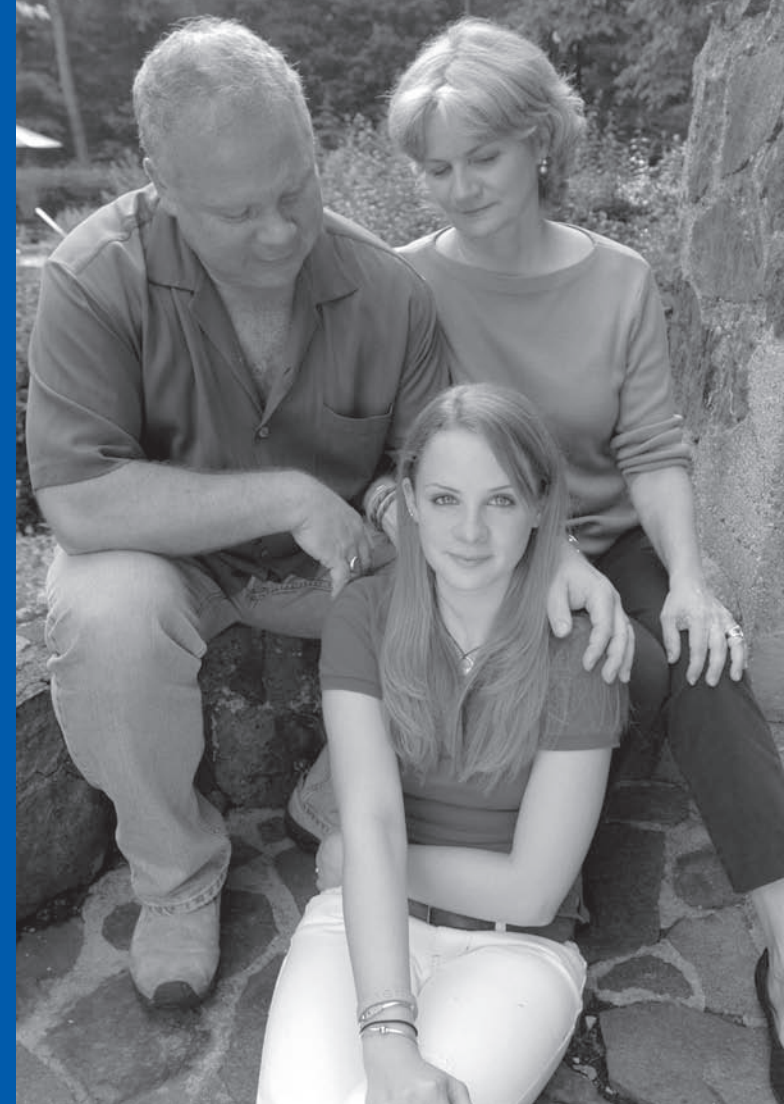
Parents and their children are encouraged to learn more about meningococcal meningitis and to talk to a physician about immunization and other prevention approaches.

National Meningitis Association

The National Meningitis Association (NMA) is a nonprofit organization established in July 2002.

Its mission is to educate families, medical professionals, and others about bacterial meningitis and prevention approaches to the disease.

For more information about NMA and its activities, or to contact a member of NMA, please call 1-866-FONE-NMA (1-866-366-3662) or visit www.nmaus.org.



**Meningitis:
Possible to Prevent.
Dangerous to Ignore.**



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www.nmaus.org



Facts About Meningococcal Meningitis

- Adolescents and young adults have an increased incidence of meningococcal disease, accounting for nearly 30 percent of all U.S. cases. One out of four cases among adolescents will result in death.
- Up to 83 percent of meningococcal disease cases among adolescents and young adults are potentially vaccine-preventable.
- College students living in dormitories are at an increased risk of getting this contagious disease compared to the general college population.
- Each year, meningococcal disease strikes nearly 3,000 Americans, and 10 to 12 percent of those infected will die.
- Up to 20 percent of survivors have long-term disabilities, such as brain damage, hearing loss, or limb amputations.
- The disease can take one of two forms: swelling of membranes that surround the brain and spinal cord (meningococcal meningitis), or the more deadly meningococemia, an infection of the blood.
- Meningococcal disease is caused by bacteria called *Neisseria meningitidis*.

Adolescents, Young Adults at Special Risk

Lifestyle factors common among adolescents and young adults seem to be linked to the disease. These include crowded living situations such as dormitories, boarding schools and sleep-away camps, going to bars, smoking, and irregular sleep habits.



Consider Vaccination

Immunization can prevent up to 83 percent of meningococcal disease cases in adolescents and young adults:

- The Food and Drug Administration has approved a meningococcal conjugate vaccine for use among 11- to 55-year-olds, which is expected to provide longer duration of immunity and decrease carriage of meningococcal bacteria among adolescents, preventing the spread of the disease.
- Vaccination protects against four of the five types of the bacteria responsible for meningococcal disease in the U.S. and for the majority of cases in adolescents and young adults.
- As with all vaccines, there may be minor reactions (pain and redness at the injection site or a mild fever).



Be Alert: Early Flu-Like Symptoms

Meningococcal disease often is misdiagnosed because its early signs are much like those of the flu or migraines. Symptoms may include high fever, headache, stiff neck, confusion, nausea, vomiting, and exhaustion.

Later, after the disease has taken hold, a rash may appear. If any of these symptoms are present and are unusually sudden and severe, call a physician. Don't wait.

How Meningitis Is Spread

The disease is spread through air droplets and direct contact with someone who is infected. That includes coughing, kissing, and sharing cigarettes, utensils, cups, or lip balm – anything an infected person touches with his or her mouth.

Adolescents and young adults can reduce their risk by being vaccinated. They can also take special precautions by not sharing certain things: utensils, beverages, cigarettes, etc.

Most cases occur in late winter to early spring.

Immunization Information

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and other key medical groups* recommend routine meningococcal disease immunization (one shot) for:

- Young adolescents at the preadolescent doctor's visit (11-12 years)
- If not previously vaccinated, immunization is recommended for high school entry or at age 15 (whichever comes first)
- College freshmen living in dormitories
- Vaccination should be made available to those who ask to be immunized.

* American Academy of Family Physicians, American Academy of Pediatrics, American College Health Association, American Medical Association, Society for Adolescent Medicine



Find Out More

For more information about meningococcal disease and immunization that can help prevent it, visit the following Web sites:

- National Meningitis Association
www.nmaus.org
- American Academy of Family Physicians
www.aafp.org
- American Academy of Pediatrics
www.aap.org
- American College Health Association
www.acha.org
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
www.cdc.gov

For medical advice about meningococcal immunization, consult your physician, college health service, or local public health department.