

Southern Adventist University
University Health Center

MENINGOCOCCAL MENINGITIS FACT SHEET

Effective July 1, 2003, the state of Tennessee requires incoming students to sign that they have received information on Meningococcal Meningitis and have either received the vaccine or signed a waiver.

Meningococcal meningitis is a rare but potentially fatal bacterial infection that causes inflammation of the membranes surrounding the brain and spinal cord. It can lead to sepsis, a life-threatening blood infection. It is difficult to diagnose because the symptoms can be mistaken for the flu or another respiratory infection. ***Meningococcal disease can get worse very rapidly and kill a healthy young adult in 48 hours or less.*** However, 1 in 5 of those who recover will suffer from permanent disabilities such as hearing loss, brain damage, seizures, and/or limb amputation.

How Common is Meningococcal Meningitis?

Although meningococcal disease is uncommon, the risk is higher for young people living on campus. About 100-125 cases occur annually on college campuses and 5-15 students die. College freshmen dormitory students are at increased risk of getting the disease. Meningitis strikes about 2,600 Americans with approximately 10-15% of these individuals dying, despite treatment with antibiotics. It is important to prevent this disease in individuals at highest risk through use of the meningococcal vaccine.

What are the Early Symptoms? It is possible to have the disease if you have fever and at least one other symptom. *Because the disease progresses rapidly, often in as little as 12 hours, prompt diagnosis and treatment is important.*

- High Fever
- Severe Headache
- Stiff Neck
- Extreme Fatigue
- Lethargy
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Sensitivity to Light
- Skin Rash

How is Meningococcal Meningitis Spread?

Up to 11% of the people in a population may be carriers who acquire natural antibodies. Meningococcal bacteria are transmitted through the air via droplets of respiratory secretions and by direct contact with an infected person. The bacteria may live harmlessly in the carrier's nose and throat and be passed along by *coughing, sneezing, kissing, or sharing a glass* with a vulnerable person who then becomes seriously ill. Persons with respiratory infections, compromised immunity, those in close contact to a known case, and travelers to endemic areas of the world are at increased risk. *Cases and outbreaks usually occur in late winter and early spring.* There can be outbreaks in which many people are infected.

Meningococcal Vaccine - Menactra

Menactra vaccine is indicated for active immunity against invasive meningococcal disease caused by *N meningitides* Serogroups A, C, Y, and W-135 in persons 11-55 years of age. The vaccine may not protect 100% of individuals. There are risks associated with all vaccines. The most common adverse reaction to Menactra vaccine may include pain, redness and swelling at the site of injection, headache, fatigue and malaise. Menactra vaccine is contraindicated in persons with known allergy to any component of the vaccine or to latex which is used in the vial stopper. Because of the risk of hemorrhage, Menactra vaccine should not be given to persons with any bleeding disorders such as hemophilia or thrombocytopenia or to persons on anticoagulant therapy unless the potential benefit clearly outweighs the risk of administration. Also, individuals who have ever had Gullian-Barre' Syndrome should discuss the vaccine with their doctor prior to administration.

For More Information

The University Health Center phone number is 423-236-2713. The vaccine is available for \$95.00 (price may vary). Please call to put your name on the order list. Charges will be placed on your student account when the vaccine is ordered. Students are responsible to file their own insurance. A walk-out statement will be provided upon request. Center for Disease Control (CDC), www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dbmd/diseaseinfo/meningococcal_a.htm
American College Health Association (ACHA), www.acha.org
Immunization Action Coalition (IAC), www.immunize.org