

Oakwood University
Health and Counseling Services

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MENINGOCOCCAL MENINGITIS FACT SHEET

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-Barr' Syndrome should discuss the vaccine with their doctor prior to administration.

For More Information

- The Health & Counseling Services phone number is 256-726-7840.
- 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