

# Meningitis

## FACTS:

- About one in 100,000 people get meningococcal disease each year in the U.S. Ten to fifteen percent of these people die, in spite of treatment with antibiotics. Of those who live, another 11-19% lose their arms or legs, become deaf, have problems with their nervous system, become mentally retarded, or suffer seizures or strokes.
- Bacterial meningitis is of greater concern than viral meningitis, because it is associated with a significant risk of brain damage and death. Meningococcal meningitis, one type of bacterial meningitis, is of particular concern because while uncommon, it does affect college-age students and the disease may progress rapidly if untreated.
- The rate of meningococcal infection for students living in residence halls in the U.S. is about two in every 100,000 students. The rate of infection is highest among first year students living in residence halls, with about five in every 100,000 freshmen infected.

Back to School Month

## RESOURCES:

**CDC's National Immunization Program**

[www.cdc.gov/nip](http://www.cdc.gov/nip)

**CDC's meningococcal disease website**

[www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dbmd/diseaseinfo/meningococcal\\_g.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dbmd/diseaseinfo/meningococcal_g.htm)

**CDC's Travelers Health**

[www.cdc.gov/travel](http://www.cdc.gov/travel)

**Meningitis Foundation of America**

<http://www.musa.org/>

**National Meningitis Foundation**

<http://www.nmaus.org/>



## WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW:

### What is meningococcal disease?

Meningococcal disease is a serious illness, caused by a bacteria or a virus. It is a leading cause of bacterial meningitis in children two to 18 years old in the United States. Meningitis is an infection of fluid surrounding the brain and the spinal cord. Meningococcal disease also causes blood infections.

Anyone can get meningococcal disease. But it is most common in infants less than one year of age and people with certain medical conditions, such as lack of a spleen. College freshmen who live in dormitories have an increased risk of getting meningococcal disease.

Meningococcal infections can be treated with drugs such as penicillin. Still, about one out of every 10 people get the disease dies from it, and many others are affected for life. This is why *preventing* the disease through the use of meningococcal vaccine is important for people at highest risk.

### Meningococcal vaccine

Two meningococcal vaccines are available in the U.S.:

-**Meningococcal polysaccharide vaccine (MPSV4)** has been available since the 1970s.

-**Meningococcal conjugate vaccine (MCV4)** was licensed in 2005.

Both vaccines can prevent four types of meningococcal disease, including two of the three types most common in the United States and a type that causes epidemics in Africa.

### Who should get meningococcal vaccine and when?

MCV4 is recommended for all children at their routine preadolescent visit (11-12 years of age). For those who have never gotten MCV4 previously, a dose is recommended at high school entry. Other adolescents who want to decrease their risk of meningococcal disease can also get the vaccine. College freshmen living in dormitories, microbiologists who are routinely exposed to meningococcal bacteria, U.S. military recruits, anyone traveling to, or living in, a part of the world where meningococcal disease is common, such as parts of Africa, anyone who has a damaged spleen, or whose spleen has been removed, anyone who has an immune system disorder, and people who might have been exposed to meningitis during an outbreak are at an increased risk and should consider being vaccinated.