Meningococcal Disease and Vaccination

New Jersey State Law mandates that you provide a response after reading the information below about meningitis.

Select one answer:

I will be residing on-campus. I have read the information about meningitis and,

☐ I have been vaccinated with meningitis vaccine within the last 5 years.
☐ I plan to be vaccinated with meningitis vaccine prior to the due date for this form.

I will not be residing on-campus. I have read the information about meningitis and,

☐ I have been vaccinated with meningitis vaccine within the last 5 years.
☐ I have decided not to receive the meningitis vaccine.
☐ I am undecided about whether or not to receive the meningitis vaccine.

Student signature: ___________________________ Date: ___________________________

Parent or legal guardian signature (if student is under 18 years of age): ___________________________

What is meningococcal disease?
Meningococcal disease refers to any illness caused by the type of bacteria (germs) called Neisseria meningitidis. Meningococcal disease may result in inflammation of the lining of the brain and spinal cord (meningitis) and/or a serious blood infection (septicemia). About 5-20% of people carry this type of bacteria in their nose and throat and do not get sick from them. But sometimes, Neisseria meningitidis can invade the body and cause meningococcal disease.

Who gets meningococcal disease?
Anyone can get meningococcal disease, but certain groups are at increased risk. These include:

- College students and military recruits living in dorms or barracks.
- People with certain medical conditions or immune system disorders including a damaged or removed spleen.
- People who may have been exposed to meningococcal disease during an outbreak.
- International travelers.

Why should you be concerned about meningococcal disease?
The bacteria are spread person-to-person through the exchange of saliva (spit) or nasal secretions. These bacteria are not as contagious as the germs that cause the common cold or flu. The bacteria are not spread by casual contact or by breathing the air where a person with meningococcal disease has been. One must be in direct (close) contact with an infected person’s secretions in order to be exposed. Close contact includes activities such as:

- Living in the same household.
- Kissing.
- Sharing eating utensils, food, drinks, cigarettes, etc.

What are the symptoms of meningococcal disease?
Common symptoms are:

- Confusion
- Fatigue (feeling very tired)
- Headache
- High fever
- Nausea
- Rash of dark purple spots
- Sensitivity to light
- Stiff neck
- Vomiting

How can meningococcal disease be prevented?
The best way to prevent meningococcal disease is to get vaccinated. There are two kinds of vaccines in the United States that protect against 4 types of meningococcal disease known as A, C, Y, W-135. Two vaccines were just recently licensed in the U.S. to help protect against Type B meningococcal meningitis.

Who should get meningococcal vaccine?
Two doses of the meningococcal vaccine that prevents infection with types A, C, Y, and W-135 are recommended for all adolescents. The first dose is recommended at 11-12 years of age followed by a booster dose on or after age 16. The vaccine is also recommended for persons at increased risk for disease. You should discuss with your healthcare provider whether you should get the vaccine against type B or whether you are at risk for disease. At TCNJ proof of receiving a meningococcal meningitis A,C,Y,W-135 vaccination on or after age 16 is a prerequisite to living in college housing.

Is the meningococcal meningitis vaccine safe?
Meningococcal vaccines are safe and effective. As with all vaccines, there can be minor reactions, including pain and redness at the injection site or a mild fever for one or two days. Severe side effects, such as a serious allergic reaction, are very rare. It is important to know that 1) no vaccine offers 100% protection; 2) protective immunity declines 3-5 years after the first dose of meningococcal vaccine and a booster dose is needed to provide continued protection; 3) Meningococcal Meningitis A,C,Y,W-135 vaccine contains only 4 of the 5 most common types of meningococcal disease and; 4) not all cases of meningitis are caused by meningococcal bacteria. Symptoms of meningitis in a vaccinated person should always warrant immediate medical attention regardless of vaccination.

Where can I get more information about meningococcal vaccine?

- Your healthcare provider
- TCNJ Student Health Services
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) at http://www.cdc.gov/meningococcal/index.html