



MENINGOCOCCAL DISEASE AND VACCINATION INFO SHEET

NEW JERSEY STATE LAW REQUIRES THAT COLLEGES PROVIDE INCOMING STUDENTS WITH INFORMATION ABOUT MENINGITIS INFECTION AND VACCINATION.

STUDENTS WILL THEN BE ASKED A QUESTION ON THE NEW STUDENT MEDICAL HISTORY IN OWL.

Meningococcal disease can be devastating and often—and unexpectedly—strikes otherwise healthy people. Although meningococcal disease is uncommon, teens and young adults 16 through 23 years old (not just those in college) are at increased risk. Meningococcal bacteria can cause severe disease, including infections of the lining of the brain and spinal cord (meningitis) and bloodstream infections (bacteremia or septicemia), and can result in permanent disabilities and even death. Common symptoms are: confusion, fatigue (feeling very tired), rash of dark purple spots, sensitivity to light, stiff neck, vomiting, headache, high fever, nausea

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.

Meningococcal 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.

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 doses are recommended for all adolescents. The first dose is recommended at 11-12 years of age. Since protection wanes, a booster dose is recommended at age 16 years to provide protection when meningococcal meningitis incidence peaks (16-21 years of age).

Teens and young adults (16 through 23 year olds) **may** also be vaccinated with Men B vaccine (serogroup B meningococcal vaccine, brand names are Bexsero® & Trumenba®). Two or three doses are needed depending on the reason for vaccination.

At TCNJ, students cannot live on-campus unless they provide proof to Student Health Services that they received a meningococcal meningitis A/C/Y/W-135 vaccination ON OR AFTER AGE 16. Men B vaccine is NOT required.

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>