

Dear Student and Parents/Guardians:

In 2003 the Nebraska State Legislature passed a law mandating all entering students receive information regarding meningococcal disease, a rare infection with potentially devastating results. Meningococcal disease is a serious illness caused by a type of bacteria called *Neisseria meningitidis*. It can lead to meningitis (infection of the lining of the brain and spinal cord) and infections of the blood. Meningococcal disease often occurs without warning—even among people who are otherwise healthy. This infection occurs sporadically in clusters and is spread by close contact with infected individuals. Students living in dorms are in a high risk group.

There are at least 12 types of *N. meningitidis*, called “serogroups.” Serogroups A, B, C, W, and Y cause most meningococcal disease. Meningococcal ACWY vaccines can help prevent meningococcal disease caused by serogroups A, C, W, and Y (these strains caused 73% of all cases in those persons over 11 years of age). A different meningococcal vaccine is available to help protect against serogroup B (which accounts for 1/3 of all cases of meningitis in teens and adults).

Please take a moment to read the other side of this paper explaining meningococcal disease and the vaccination (specific information is available from the CDC regarding meningitis and each available vaccine via links provided). Vaccination IS RECOMMENDED for first year students living in dorms but is not required. As of 10/1/13, the CDC has updated its recommendations for meningococcal vaccination for college students. The CDC now recommends that all college students living in dorms get vaccinated against meningococcal disease. The CDC also recommends that all college students get vaccinated against meningococcal disease, regardless of whether they live in dorms. The CDC also recommends that all college students get vaccinated against meningococcal disease, regardless of whether they live in dorms. The CDC also recommends that all college students get vaccinated against meningococcal disease, regardless of whether they live in dorms.

What is meningococcal meningitis?

Meningococcal disease is a rare but potentially fatal bacterial infection. The disease is expressed as either meningococcal meningitis, an inflammation of the membranes surrounding the brain and spinal cord or meningococemia, the presence of bacteria in the blood.

What causes meningococcal meningitis?

Meningococcal disease is caused by the bacterium *Neisseria meningitidis*, a leading cause of meningitis and septicemia (or blood poisoning) in the United States. Meningitis is one of the most common manifestations of the disease, although it has been known to cause septic pneumonia, brain inflammation and other syndromes.

How many people die from meningococcal meningitis each year?

Meningococcal disease strikes about 3000 Americans each year and is responsible for approximately 300 deaths annually. It is estimated that 100 to 125 cases of meningococcal disease occur annually on college campuses and 5 to 15 students die as a result.

How is meningococcal meningitis spread?

Meningococcal disease is transmitted through the air via droplets of respiratory secretions and direct contact with an infected person. Direct contact, for these purposes is defined as oral contact with shared items such as cigarettes or drinking glasses or intimate contact such as kissing.

What are the symptoms?

The early symptoms usually associated with meningococcal disease include fever, severe headache, stiff neck, rash, irritability and lethargy, and may resemble the flu. Because the disease progresses rapidly, often in as little as 12 hours, students are urged to seek medical care immediately if they experience two or more of these symptoms concurrently.

Who is at risk?

Recent evidence found students residing on campus at risk.