



**Pacific University
Student Health Center
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Meningococcal Vaccine and Disease Information

Meningococcal Disease

Meningococcal Meningitis is a serious, potentially fatal infection that most often causes severe swelling of the tissue around the brain and spinal cord (meningitis) or a serious blood infection (meningococemia). The symptoms of meningococcal meningitis can appear quickly or over several days. Typically they develop within 3-7 days after exposure.

Symptoms may include:

- Fever
- Headache
- Stiff Neck
- Rash (purpura often appears as flat, dark purple spots on arms, legs, then torso)
- Nausea and/or vomiting
- Feeling very drowsy or weak, muscle or joint pain
- Confusion
- Sensitivity to Light

If you think you have any of these symptoms, call a doctor right away or go to emergency room. Meningococcal meningitis is very serious and can be fatal. In fatal cases, deaths can occur in as little as a few hours and in non-fatal cases permanent disabilities can occur.

How Meningococcal Disease Spreads

The bacteria spread through the exchange of respiratory secretions during close, direct contact with an infected person for several hours. Other factors that increase risk: first year college students living in residence halls, college students living in group settings (such as fraternities and sororities), military recruits, those who lack a spleen or have certain immune disorders.

How to Reduce the Spread of Meningococcal Disease

- Get vaccinated
- Do not share:
 - ✓ Cups, water bottles, or eating utensils
 - ✓ Toothbrushes
 - ✓ Make-up or lip balm
 - ✓ Cigarettes, e-cigarettes, pipes or hookah
- Do not smoke tobacco or marijuana
- Do not drink from a common punchbowl
- Know that kissing poses a risk
- Cover your cough (coughing and spitting can transmit the bacteria)
- Wash hands often with soap and water or use hand sanitizer

Vaccination

There are vaccines that help provide protection against all serogroups of *Neisseria meningitidis* bacteria that are commonly seen in the United States. Like with any vaccine, meningococcal vaccines are not 100% effective. This means that even if you have been vaccinated there is still a chance you can develop a meningococcal infection.

Vaccine is available at local pharmacies. Pharmacies may need to order the vaccine so it is a good idea to call in advance before you go in. Pharmacies have the ability to bill your insurance if the vaccine is covered.

Types of meningococcal vaccine:

Meningitis ACWY vaccines have been available since the 1980s, but Meningitis B vaccines have been available in the US only since late 2014.

The CDC recommends Meningitis B vaccination for persons 10 years and older in certain groups who are at increased risk for Meningitis B disease. In addition, the CDC says that Meningitis B vaccines may be administered to young adults who are 16–23 years old, but preferably to those who are 16–18 years old.

For the most current vaccine recommendation, please call your medical provider and/or visit:
http://www.helppreventdisease.com/adult_vaccines/meningococcal-meningitis/index.html