

MENINGOCOCCAL VACCINE **for HIGHER EDUCATION STUDENTS**

What you need to know:

Effective June 1, 2000, Maryland law requires that an individual enrolled in an institution of higher education in Maryland who resides in on-campus student housing must be vaccinated against meningococcal disease. An individual may be exempt from this requirement if (1) the institution of higher education provides the individual or the individual's parent or guardian (if the individual is a minor) detailed information on the risks associated with meningococcal disease and the availability and effectiveness of any vaccine, and (2) the individual or a minor individual's parent or guardian signs a waiver stating the individual or the parent or guardian has received and reviewed the information provided and has chosen that the individual will not be vaccinated against meningococcal disease.

What is Meningococcal disease?

Meningococcal disease is a rare, but life threatening, illness that is caused by the bacterium *Neisseria meningitidis*. It is a leading cause of bacterial meningitis (an infection of the brain and spinal cord coverings) in the United States. The most severe form of the disease is meningococemia, infection of the bloodstream by this bacterium.

Deaths from meningococcal disease have occurred among Maryland college students in recent years. Students living in dormitories or residence halls are at an increased risk. The Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene encourages meningococcal vaccination of higher education students.

About 2,600 people get meningococcal disease each year in the U.S. 10-15% of these people die, in spite of treatment with antibiotics. Of those who live, 10% lose their arms or legs, become deaf, have problems with their nervous system, become mentally retarded, and/or suffer seizures or strokes.

About the vaccine:

Meningococcal vaccine can be effective in preventing four types of meningococcal disease. The vaccine is not effective in preventing all types of the disease, but it does help protect many people who might become sick if they do not get the vaccine. Drugs such as penicillin can be used to treat meningococcal infection. Still, about one out of every ten people who get the disease dies from it, and many others are affected for life.

A vaccine, like any medicine, is capable of causing serious problems, such as a severe allergic reaction. **People should not get meningococcal vaccine if they have ever had a serious allergic reaction to a previous dose of meningococcal vaccine.** Some people who get meningococcal vaccine have mild side effects, such as redness or pain where the shot was given (which is usually under the skin of the upper arm). A small percentage of people who receive the vaccine develop a fever. The vaccine may be given to pregnant women.

Meningococcal vaccine is available in some school health centers, travel clinics, some county health departments, and the offices of some health providers.

Meningococcal Disease on Campus....Know Your Risk

MENINGOCOCCAL VACCINE REQUIREMENT

I have received the meningococcal vaccine as required by Maryland law for individuals residing in on-campus student housing at an institution of higher education. Documentation from a physician or health clinic of receipt of vaccination is attached.

Name of Individual

Signature of Individual (if over 18 years of age)

Date

Signature of Parent/Guardian
(if under student is under 18 years of age)

Date

WAIVER

Individuals 18 years of age and older may sign a written waiver choosing not to be vaccinated against meningococcal disease. For individuals under 18 years of age, the parent or guardian of the individual must review the information on the risks of meningococcal disease and sign a written waiver that he/she has chosen not to have the individual vaccinated against meningococcal disease.

For individuals over 18 years of age:

I am 18 years of age or older. I have received and reviewed the information provided on the risk of meningococcal disease and the effectiveness and availability of the vaccination. I understand that meningococcal disease is rare, but life threatening. I understand that Maryland law requires that an individual enrolled in an institution of higher education who resides in on-campus student housing shall receive vaccination against meningococcal disease unless the individual signs a waiver of the vaccination.

I choose to waive receipt of the meningococcal vaccine.

Signature of Individual

Date

Name of Individual (please print)

For individuals under the age of 18:

I have received and reviewed the information provided on the risk of meningococcal disease and the effectiveness and availability of the vaccination. I understand that meningococcal disease is rare, but life threatening. I understand that Maryland law requires that an individual enrolled in an institution of higher education who resides in on-campus student housing shall receive vaccination against meningococcal disease unless the individual signs a waiver of the vaccination.

I choose to waive receipt of the meningococcal vaccine for my child, _____
Name of child

Signature of Parent/Guardian

Date