

MENINGITIS

What is meningitis?

- Meningitis is a rare but potentially fatal bacterial infection.
- It can occur in two forms: either meningococcal meningitis, an inflammation that affects the brain and spinal cord, or as meningococemia, the presence of bacteria in the blood.
- Permanent brain damage, hearing loss, learning disability, limb amputation, kidney failure, or death can result from infection.

Quick facts:

- Meningitis strikes about 3,000 Americans each year, and claims as many as 300 lives.
- Between 100 and 125 cases occur on college campuses every year.
- Five to fifteen college students die each year as a result of meningitis.
- Cases among teenagers and young adults have more than doubled since 1991.

Who is at risk of contracting meningitis?

- Anyone in close contact with a known case.
- College students, particularly freshmen, who live in campus residence halls.
- Anyone with an upper respiratory infection with a compromised immune system.
- Anyone traveling to endemic areas of the world where meningitis is prevalent.

Is there a vaccine to help prevent meningitis?

- A safe and effective vaccine is available. The vaccine is 85-100% effective in preventing four kinds of bacteria that cause about 70% of disease in the U.S.
- The vaccine is safe, with mild and infrequent side effects, such as redness and pain at the injection site lasting up to two days
- After vaccination, immunity develops within seven to ten days and remains effective for approximately three to five years. As with any vaccine, vaccination against meningitis may not protect 100% of all susceptible individuals.

Is vaccination recommended for college students?

- Certain college students, particularly freshmen who live or plan to live in residence halls, have a 6-fold increased risk of disease.
- The American College Health Association has adopted the recommendation of the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices of the Center of Disease Control and Prevention, which states....that college students, particularly freshmen living in residence halls, be educated about the meningococcal meningitis and the potential benefits of vaccination. Other undergraduate students wishing to reduce their risk of meningitis can also choose to be vaccinated.

For further information about meningitis and the vaccine:

- Visit the campus Health and Counseling Services at www2.uwsuper.edu/shcs/meningitis.htm
- Contact your family physician.
- Center for Disease Control and Prevention website: www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dbmd/diseaseinfo
- American College Health Association website: www.acha.org

HEPATITIS B

Hepatitis B facts:

- Hepatitis B is the most common liver infection in the world. It is caused by the hepatitis B virus (HBV) that attacks liver cells and can lead to liver failure, cirrhosis (scarring) or cancer of the liver.
- The virus is transmitted through contact with blood and bodily fluids that contain blood.
- This year alone, 100,000 new people will become infected with HBV; the Center for Disease Control estimates that 1.25 million Americans are already infected with hepatitis B.

How is HBV transmitted?

- HBV is most efficiently transmitted through blood and infected bodily fluids. This includes: unprotected sex, sharing IV drug needles, living in a household with an infected person, an infected mother to her newborn child at birth, sharing earrings, razors, or toothbrushes with an infected person, unsterilized needles, including tattoo or piercing needles, human bites.

HBV is NOT spread by:

- kissing on cheek or lips
- coughing or sneezing
- casual contact such as hugging or holding hands
- eating food prepared by an infected individual

People are at MOST risk if they:

- are born to mothers who are infected with HBV; live in close household contact with a chronically infected individual; adopt a child from a country where HBV is prevalent
- have unprotected sex or have had more than one sexual partner in the last six months; have ever been diagnosed with a sexually transmitted disease; men who have sex with men
- share needles and syringes; are a patient on kidney dialysis
- are a health care provider or emergency responder who comes into contact with bodily fluids; live or work in an institutional setting, such as a prison or group home.

Can HBV be prevented?

Yes. Ask your doctor about the safe and effective vaccine and protect yourself for a lifetime. The Center for Disease Control recommends that all infants, children and adolescents up to age 18 receive the HBV vaccine. The vaccine is also recommended for all adults who may be at high risk for infection. It only takes three shots to provide a lifetime of protection.

Other Resources:

- Center for Disease Control at www.cdc.gov/hepatitis
- American Liver Foundation at www.liverfoundation.org
- Immunization Action Coalition at www.immunize.org