

Important Information of Meningitis for OSU Students

Meningococcal Meningitis

Meningitis is an illness involving inflammation of the coverings of the brain and spinal cord. It can be caused by viruses or bacteria. One of the most serious bacterial infections is Meningococcal meningitis, which is potentially life threatening, and that requires immediate treatment.

Symptoms of this disease may include high fever and chills, headache, stiff neck and stiff back, nausea and vomiting, arm, leg or abdominal pain, rash, confusion, delusions or hallucinations, or coma. Death occurs in approximately 10% of cases.

Meningococcal disease causes ~300 deaths a year. There are also several other forms of meningitis, caused by bacteria, viruses, and other agents. While 10% of the general population carries meningococcal bacteria in their noses and throats in a harmless state, these bacteria do not live long outside of the body, and so are not easily transmitted by routine contact with an infected person.

Those having more direct contact with the oral secretions of a person who has meningococcal disease (kissing, sharing utensils, or who have been exposed to coughing or sneezing), however, are at increased risk of getting the disease.

Prevention

Students are advised to avoid direct contact with anyone suspected of having this illness. If you have been exposed, you should contact a doctor as soon as possible, since antibiotics are often prescribed as a preventive measure.

The meningococcal vaccine is effective against several types of these bacteria. The vaccine consists of one injection, and takes about two weeks to reach full protection. While this makes the vaccine less useful in an exposure situation, it can be used to prevent future disease.

Meningococcal Vaccines

The current vaccine for prevention of this disease is Meningococcal Conjugate Vaccine. It is recommended for routine use by first-year college students living on campus and some international travelers. This vaccine gives immunity to 98% people getting it, and it also reduces carriage of this organism in healthy people. We don't know how long the protection last, but there is no current recommendation of booster shots.

The American College Health Association and U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommend that college students and their parents be educated about this disease and the availability of a vaccine. All first-year students living in residence halls are required to certify that they are aware of this vaccine as part of their residence hall contract (Ohio Revised Code 1713.55).

Vaccine Programs

Student Health Services is actively involved in increasing awareness of this disease and offers vaccine two ways:

- **Immunizations at the Student Health Center** - Meningococcal and other vaccines are available year-round for enrolled students, on a scheduled appointment basis. Once on campus this fall, students can call 292-4321 to schedule.
- **Summer Orientation** –Student Health Services offers meningitis vaccine to incoming first-year students participating in summer orientation. Since students at orientation will not be registered yet, this is a pay-as-you-go program, but we will be able to supply the student with a standard claim form to submit to their health insurance carrier. Your carrier determines coverage for vaccinations.



STUDENT
Health Services
at the Wilce Student Health Center