

Meningitis Information Sheet

Texas law requires that all new college students be provided with information regarding meningococcal disease. Bacterial meningitis is a serious, potentially deadly disease that can progress very quickly. It is an inflammation of the membranes that surround the brain and spinal cord. The bacteria that cause meningitis can also infect the blood. This disease strikes about 3,000 Americans each year, including 100-125 on college campuses, leading to 5-15 deaths among college students every year.

What are the symptoms?

- High fever
- Rash or purple patches on skin
- Nausea / vomiting
- Severe headache
- Light sensitivity
- Stiff neck
- Confusion and sleepiness
- Lethargy
- Seizures

The more symptoms, the higher the risk, so when these symptoms appear seek immediate medical attention.

How is meningitis diagnosed?

- Diagnosis is made by a medical provider and is usually based on a combination of clinical symptoms and laboratory results from blood and spinal fluid.
- Early diagnosis and treatment can greatly improve the likelihood of recovery.

How do I get meningitis?

- The disease is transmitted when people exchange saliva (such as by kissing, or by sharing drinking containers, utensils, cigarettes, toothbrushes, etc.) or come in contact with respiratory or throat secretions.
- Coming into close contact with carriers, sharing such items as drinking glasses, and even kissing are ways of spreading and/or becoming infected with the disease.
- Examples of such would be roommates, close friends, or classmates in a relatively small classroom. Because of these factors, students at institutions of higher education are considered to be at increased risk.

What can happen to me if I catch meningitis?

- Death (in 8 to 24 hours from perfectly healthy to dead)
- Kidney failure
- Permanent brain damage
- Learning disability
- Hearing loss, blindness
- Limb damage (fingers, toes, arms, legs) that requires amputation
- Multiple other medical problems

What can I do?

- Antibiotic treatment, if received early, can save lives and increase chances of recovery. However, permanent disability or death can still occur.
- Meningococcal vaccination is available to help prevent the disease. The vaccine:
 - is effective against 4 of the 5 most common bacterial types that cause 70% of the disease in the U.S. (but does not protect against all types of meningitis).
 - takes 7-10 days to become effective, with protection lasting 3-5 years.
 - is very safe – the most common side effects are redness and minor pain at injection site for up to two days.
 - is commonly available at many doctors' offices, as well as most pharmacies.

For additional information:

- Contact your primary care provider.
- Contact the LCU Student Health Office (upstairs in the Student Life Building) – phone 806.720.7482.
- Contact the City of Lubbock Health Department (806.775.2933) or the Texas Department of State Health Services (1.888.963.7111).
- View the following websites: www.cdc.gov/meningococcal; www.acha.org