



THE DISEASE

WHAT IS MENINGITIS?

Meningitis is a rare but potentially fatal bacterial infection. It can occur in two forms—as 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 the infection.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS?

Symptoms are similar to those of influenza and including *high fever, rash, vomiting, severe headache, neck stiffness, lethargy, nausea, and sensitivity to light*.

Meningitis usually peaks in late winter and early spring, overlapping the flu season, and its symptoms can be easily mistaken for the flu. Due to the quick progression of the infection, students should seek medical care immediately if they experience two more of these symptoms at the same time. If left untreated, meningitis can lead to shock and death within hours of the initial symptoms.

HOW DOES IT SPREAD?

The infection is spread by direct contact with infected individuals (for example, sharing a glass or cigarette, or kissing) or through the air via droplets of respiratory secretions (for example, coughing, or sneezing).

WHO IS AT RISK?

Meningitis can strike at any age; however, certain groups have a greater risk for contracting the disease:

- College students, particularly freshmen, who live in campus residence halls.
- Social aspects of college life also appear to be risk factors. Smoking, exposure to second hand-smoke, excessive alcohol consumption, and bar patronage all increase the chances that one will contract meningitis from an infected individual.
- Anyone in close contact with a known case of meningitis.
- Anyone with an upper respiratory infection and/or a weak immune system.
- Anyone traveling to endemic areas of the world where meningitis is prevalent.



PREVENTION

HOW DO YOU PREVENT MENINGITIS?

A safe, effective vaccine is available against four kinds of bacteria (serogroups A, C, Y, W-135) that cause 70% to 85% of disease in the U.S.

HOW SAFE IS THE VACCINE?

Side effects of the vaccine are mild and infrequent, consisting primarily of redness and swelling at the injection site lasting up to two days. The vaccine should not be given during any acute illness and should not be administered to individuals who are sensitive to thimerosal or any other components of the vaccine. Pregnant women should consult their physician regarding the risks and benefits of immunization.

HOW EFFECTIVE IS THE VACCINE?

After vaccination, immunity develops within seven to ten days, with protection lasting for at least three to five years. The vaccine develops protective levels of antibodies in over 90% of adults. As with any vaccine, the meningitis vaccination may not protect 100% of susceptible individuals.

HOW CAN COLLEGE STUDENTS FURTHER PROTECT THEMSELVES?

A person can maximize their own body's immune system by eating a balanced diet, exercising, and getting adequate amounts of sleep. Also, avoid excessive use of cigarettes and alcohol, in particular, do not make a habit of sharing drinks and cigarettes.

CAMPUS RESOURCES

**UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH
AT JOHNSTOWN
STUDENT HEALTH SERVICES
G-10 STUDENT UNION
JOHNSTOWN, PA 15904
PHONE - 814-269-7110
FAX - 814-269-2053**

**UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH
AT JOHNSTOWN
POLICE DEPARTMENT
PHONE - 814-269-7005**

HOSPITALS/CLINICS

**CONEMAUGH MEMORIAL MEDICAL CENTER
1086 FRANKLIN STREET
JOHNSTOWN, PA 15905
PHONE - 814-534-9000**

**UPMC LEE REGIONAL
320 MAIN STREET
JOHNSTOWN, PA 15901
PHONE - 814-533-0123**

**CONEMAUGH WINDBER MEDICAL CENTER
600 SOMERSET STREET
WINDBER, PA 15963
PHONE - 814-467-6611**

INTERNET RESOURCES

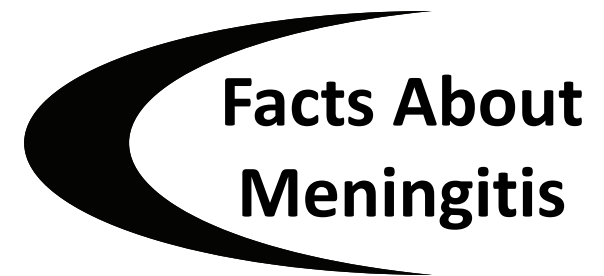
**CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL
www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dbmd.diseaseinfo**

**AMERICAN COLLEGE HEALTH ASSOCIATION
www.acha.org**

**PENNSYLVANIA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
www.health.state.pa.us**

University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown Student Health Services

**COMPLIMENTS OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH
AT JOHNSTOWN
STUDENT HEALTH SERVICES
A DIVISION OF
STUDENT AFFAIRS**



**Information for
Students and Parents**