

## **Meningitis Information**

- **College students who reside in residence halls are at increased risk for meningitis.** Meningococcal disease is a potentially fatal bacterial infection commonly referred to as meningitis. Freshmen living in residence halls are found to have a six-fold increased risk for the disease. However, 70% of all cases of meningococcal disease in college students are vaccine preventable.
- To become vaccinated, contact your physician or your State Department of Health.
- Pennsylvania legislation (Senate Bill 955) **MANDATES** that all incoming freshman living in residence halls either have the meningitis vaccine **OR** sign a declination statement with Housing and Residence Life during move-in.
- **What is meningococcal meningitis?** Meningitis is a rare, potentially fatal bacterial disease that can lead to swelling of fluid surrounding the brain and spinal column as well as severe and permanent disabilities, such as hearing loss, brain damage, seizures, limb amputation and even death.
- **How is it spread?** Meningococcal meningitis is spread through the air via respiratory secretions or close contact with an infected person. This can include coughing, sneezing, kissing or sharing items like utensils, cigarettes and drinking glasses.
- **What are the symptoms?** Symptoms of meningococcal meningitis often resemble the flu and can include high fever, severe headache, stiff neck, rash, nausea, vomiting, lethargy and confusion.
- **Who is at risk?** College students who live in residence halls have been found to have an increased risk for meningococcal meningitis and should consider vaccination to reduce the risk for the disease.
- **Can meningitis be prevented?** Yes. A safe and effective vaccine is available to protect against four of the five most common strains of the disease. The vaccine provides protection for approximately three to five years. Adverse reactions to the meningitis vaccine are mild and infrequent, consisting primarily of redness and pain at the injection site and rarely a fever. Vaccination against meningitis may not protect 100 percent of all susceptible individuals. It does not protect against viral meningitis.
- **For more information:** You can visit the websites of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), [www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dbmd/diseaseinfo](http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dbmd/diseaseinfo), and the American College Health Association, [www.acha.org](http://www.acha.org).