

Meningitis Vaccine Recommended

The Lewis and Clark College Health Service highly recommends that students receive the meningitis vaccines prior to their arrival or while they are students at Lewis and Clark College. If students are unable to get the vaccines from their provider at home the Health Service offers both the routine meningitis vaccine against serogroups A, C, W and Y and the newer vaccine series for serogroup B.

About Meningococcus

Meningococcus is a type of bacteria. It can cause meningitis and other serious infections. Three subtypes (B, C, and Y) are responsible for most meningococcal disease in the United States. Type B has caused approximately 50% of the cases in Oregon.

Meningococcus bacteria live in the nose and throat of 5 to 10 percent of adults, but most people who carry the meningococcus bacteria do not get sick from it. Meningococcal disease is rare, generally striking less than 1 person out of every 100,000 per year. It mostly affects adolescents and young adults, seldom causing illness after age 25. Meningococcal disease is a very serious disease with the potential to cause brain damage, deafness, paralysis and loss of fingers, toes, or limbs. About 10 percent of the cases are fatal.

People with a fever along with severe headache, neck stiffness or rash should seek medical attention immediately. The disease can progress quickly but can be cured with antibiotics if they are given promptly.

How it spreads

Meningococcus spreads by coughing, sneezing, or close personal contact, such as sharing drinks or kissing. It is less contagious than the common cold or flu.

Close contact includes:

- Living with a person ill with the disease.
 - Spending several hours with an ill person through sports teams, close living quarters, clubs or attending parties.
 - Kissing an ill person, or sharing drinks, eating utensils, smoking materials, water bottles, drinking glasses, cosmetics, or toothbrushes.
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Prevention

In addition to getting vaccinated, you can lower your risk of infection by washing your hands, not sharing cigarettes or eating utensils, and not drinking from a bottle, cup or straw used by someone else.

Smoking increases the risk of meningococcal infection.

(Information courtesy of the Oregon Health Authority)

Resources:

<http://www.cdc.gov/meningococcal/vaccine-info.html>

For More information about serogroup B meningococcal disease please refer to: “What you Need to Know about Serogroup B Meningococcal Disease Frequently Asked Questions”:

<http://www.nfid.org/idinfo/meningococcal/meningococcal-college-toolkit/meningococcal-faqs.pdf>