

Meningococcal Disease (MD)

Important Health Update for Wisconsin College Students and their Families

November 2016—Three cases of Meningococcal Disease (MD) have been confirmed in students attending the University of Wisconsin (UW)—Madison campus. There are five different serogroups (A, B, C, Y, W-135) of the meningococcal disease bacteria and all three UW cases were serogroup B. Local health authorities have urged MD serogroup B vaccination for students attending the university. The serogroup B meningococcal vaccine is in addition to the meningococcal conjugate vaccine (Menactra[®], MenHibrix[®], and Menveo[®]) that people routinely receive before entering college.

What is meningococcal disease (MD)?

Meningococcal disease is an illness caused by the bacteria *Neisseria meningitidis*. It can cause bloodstream infections and *meningitis*, which occurs when bacteria enter the protective membranes covering the brain and spinal cord.

What are the signs and symptoms of MD?

The time from when a person is exposed to the disease and then develops illness ranges from two to 10 days, but most commonly occurs between three and five days after contact with an infected person. Symptoms can include:

- Sudden onset of headache and/or high fever
- Stiff neck
- Rash
- Nausea, vomiting
- Sensitivity to light, confusion or combativeness

MD can be fatal, but when diagnosed early it can usually be treated effectively with antibiotics. It is important to watch for symptoms and **seek medical care as soon as possible**.

How is MD spread?

The bacteria that cause MD are spread through direct contact with saliva (spit) and other fluids from the mouth or throat. Direct contact includes kissing, sharing eating or drinking utensils (including water bottles), sharing cigarettes or smoking materials, or other direct contact with saliva or respiratory secretions. Anyone who had direct contact with an infected individual's saliva should be considered at increased risk.

How can I protect myself?

- In addition to the meningococcal conjugate vaccine, get vaccinated against meningococcal disease serogroup B.
- Avoid sharing drinks, cigarettes, smoking equipment, or similar items.
- Avoid contact with spit or other fluids from the nose or mouth of other persons.

Is there a vaccine and where can I get vaccinated?

Currently there are two vaccines licensed in the United States to prevent MD serogroup B: Trumenba[®] and Bexsero[®]. Both are commonly available at university health services, doctor's offices, and clinics.

If I was previously vaccinated, do I need to be re-vaccinated now?

If a person was previously vaccinated against the other strains of meningococcal disease (A,C,Y, W-135), that will not protect against the serogroup B strain. A specific vaccine to protect against serogroup B is needed. Either two or three doses, depending on which vaccine is used, will be needed for full protection. Bexsero[®] is a two-dose series given at least one month apart. Trumenba[®] is currently a two- or three-dose series given between 0 and 6 months apart.

