

Meningococcal Meningitis Information

Dear Parents and Student:

The state of Iowa requires that incoming students receive information regarding the risks associated with Meningococcal disease and the effectiveness of vaccine available to prevent this disease.

The American College Health Association (ACHA) recommends all first-year students living in residence halls receive the meningococcal vaccine. Adolescents and young adults account for 30% of all cases of meningitis in the United States. In addition, approximately 100 to 125 cases of meningococcal disease occur on college campuses each year, and 5 to 15 students will die as a result. Evidence shows approximately 70-80% of cases in the college age group are potentially vaccine-preventable.

The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) for the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) also recommends that all incoming freshmen living in dormitories be vaccinated against meningococcal disease. The ACIP and ACHA's recommendations further state that other college students under 25 years of age may choose to receive meningococcal vaccination to reduce their risk for the disease.

Meningococcal disease is contagious and progresses very rapidly. The bacteria are spread person-to-person through the air by respiratory droplets (e.g., coughing, sneezing). The bacteria can also be transmitted through direct contact with an infected person, such as oral contact with shared items like cigarettes or drinking glasses, and through kissing.

Symptoms of meningococcal disease often resemble those of the flu, making it sometimes difficult to diagnosis, and may include high fever, severe headache, stiff neck, rash, nausea, vomiting, fatigue, and confusion. Students who notice these symptoms especially if the symptoms are unusually sudden or severe, should contact the Student Health Services or local medical center. If not treated early, meningitis can lead to death or permanent disabilities. 1 in 5 of those who survive will suffer from long-term side effects, such as brain damage, hearing loss, seizures or limb amputation.

Please discuss having this vaccination with your health care provider. For more information, visit the following web sites: www.acha.org or www.cdc.gov. Thanks for considering this recommendation.

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