

Meningococcal Vaccine Information

Being exposed to risky or dangerous behavior is a part of adolescence. As a parent, it is natural for you to do everything you can to protect your family. That's why it's important for you to know about the meningococcal vaccine to help protect your teen. Also known as meningitis, meningococcal disease is a rare but very dangerous bacterial infection. Even in healthy people, the disease can develop quickly and cause life-threatening complications within hours. Up to 1 in 5 survivors can suffer from life-long complications, such as loss of a limb, hearing loss, and brain damage.

The bacteria that causes meningococcal disease are spread from person to person through coughs and sneezes, as well as through saliva. So things teens are known to do- sharing water bottles, cups and utensils; kissing; and generally being close together, such as being in cramped locker rooms or taking long bus rides. Meningococcal disease can be difficult to recognize because early symptoms or signs are similar to those of the flu. These include:

- Sudden onset of fever
- Headache
- Stiff Neck
- Rash
- Nausea/Vomiting
- Light Sensitivity
- Altered mental status

According to the CDC, the best way to prevent meningococcal disease is through vaccination. So, who should get vaccinated?

- Adolescents 11-18 years of age should receive a routine vaccine. The best time is at the 11-12 year old check up.

- Teens 16 years old should receive a booster, if previously vaccinated at age 11
- College freshman living in dormitories, if not previously vaccinated
- Anyone at increased risk on meningococcal disease

As always, talk to your health-care provider about any questions or concerns you may have. For more information, you can also visit the CDC website

at: <http://www.cdc.gov/meningitis/about/faq.html>