

MENINGITIS ON CAMPUS - KNOW YOUR RISK

- Meningitis strikes about 3,000 Americans each year and 5 to 15 college students die each year as a result.
- Meningitis is a rare but potentially fatal bacterial infection that affects the brain and spinal cord.
- Meningococcal bacteria are transmitted through air droplets and direct contact with persons already infected with the disease.
- Direct contact also occurs with shared items, such as cigarettes or drinking glasses, or through intimate contact such as kissing.
- Meningitis usually peaks in late winter and early spring, and symptoms can easily be mistaken for the flu.
- Early symptoms of Meningitis are:
 - high fever
 - rash
 - vomiting
 - severe headache
 - neck stiffness
 - lethargy
 - nausea
 - sensitivity to light
- Because the infection progresses quickly, students should seek medical care immediately if 2 or more of these symptoms occur at one time.
- If untreated, meningitis can lead to shock and death within hours of the first symptoms.
- Meningitis can strike at any age; however, certain groups have a greater risk for contracting the disease:
 - College students, particularly freshmen, who live in campus residence halls.
 - Anyone in close contact with a known case.
- A safe, effective vaccine is available.
- After vaccination, immunity develops within 7 to 10 days and remains effective for approximately 3 to 5 years.