

MENINGOCOCCAL DISEASE AND HEPATITIS B

South Carolina law requires all public institutions to inform entering college students about the risks of meningococcal disease and Hepatitis B. Clemson University requires the meningococcal conjugate vaccine (Menactra, Menveo) after the 16th birthday for all entering students age 21 or younger. If the initial dose was given before the 16th birthday, a booster is required. Entering students must present proof of meningococcal conjugate vaccination or may sign a waiver declining the meningitis vaccination. All other college students who wish to reduce their risk of infection may choose to be vaccinated. A second vaccine specific for prevention of serogroup B meningococcal disease (MenB) is not required but is available for individuals wishing to reduce their risk of acquiring the disease. The Hepatitis B vaccine is not required but is highly recommended. The meningococcal and Hepatitis B vaccines are available at Redfern Health Center.

Meningococcal 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 kissing. If not treated early, meningitis can lead to death or permanent disabilities. One in five of those who survive will suffer from long-term side effects, such as brain damage, hearing loss, seizures or limb amputation.

Meningococcal disease can affect people at any age. The rate of infection is highest in infancy, with the second peak in adolescence. Annually, about 1,100 cases of invasive meningococcal disease occur in the U.S., with 21 percent of cases occurring among adolescents and young adults aged 14–24. Due to lifestyle factors, such as crowded living situations, bar patronage, smoking or exposure to second-hand smoke, irregular sleep patterns and sharing of personal items, college students living in residence halls are at a higher risk of acquiring meningococcal disease than the general college population.

In the United States, potentially vaccine-preventable strains cause 73 percent of all cases of meningococcal disease among persons aged 11 years or older and are caused by strains preventable with the conjugate vaccine. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the American College Health Association recommend the conjugate meningitis (MCV4) vaccine for all first-year college students living in residence halls to protect against four of the five most common strains (or types) of *Neisseria meningitidis* (A, C, Y and W). A specific vaccine to protect against the fifth most common strain of *N. meningitidis*, serogroup B, is also available (MenB). The MenB vaccine is highly recommended for individuals at increased risk of acquiring meningococcal disease such as those with compromised immune systems due to disease or undergoing immunosuppressive therapies.

Hepatitis B

Hepatitis B is a contagious liver disease that results from infection with the Hepatitis B virus. When first infected, a person can develop an “acute” infection, which can range in severity from a very mild illness with few or no symptoms to a serious condition requiring hospitalization. Some people are able to fight the infection and clear the virus. For others, the infection remains and leads to a chronic or lifelong illness. Over time, the infection can cause serious health problems including liver damage, cirrhosis, liver failure and liver cancer. Every year, approximately 3,000 people in the U.S. and more than 600,000 people worldwide die from Hepatitis B-related liver disease.

In the U.S., Hepatitis B is most commonly spread through sexual contact. The Hepatitis B virus is 50–100 times more infectious than HIV and can be passed through the exchange of body fluids, such as semen, vaginal fluids and blood. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the best way to prevent Hepatitis B is by getting vaccinated. For adults, the Hepatitis B vaccine is given as a series of three shots over a period of six months. The entire series is needed for long-term protection.

Retrieved from:

acha.org/topics/meningitis.cfm

acha.org/topics/hepatitis.cfm

cdc.gov/hepatitis/HBV/PDFs/HepBGeneralFactSheet.pdf

cdc.gov/meningococcal/clinical-info.html



Please visit our website at clemson.edu/studenthealth.