

# OFF TO COLLEGE?



## Before you start college,

make sure you are up-to-date on all your shots.

### College Immunization Checklist:

- ☐ **MMR** (measles, mumps, rubella) – 2 doses
- ☐ **Tdap** (tetanus, diphtheria, pertussis)
- ☐ **Varicella** (chickenpox) – 2 doses
- ☐ **Hepatitis B** – 3 doses
- ☐ **HPV** (human papillomavirus) – 3 doses
- ☐ **Meningococcal**  
1 dose at age 16 or older

Some of these are recommended and others are required for enrollment.

## What you should know about meningococcal disease:

- Meningococcal (me-nin-je-kok-ul) disease is a serious illness caused by bacteria that can infect the blood or areas around the brain and spinal cord. Infection can lead to brain damage, disability, and rapid death.
- Meningitis is the most common form of meningococcal disease. Common **symptoms of meningitis** include stiff neck, headache, and high fever.
- The meningococcal conjugate vaccine is your best shot at preventing several types of meningococcal disease.
- A booster dose of the vaccine is now recommended at age 16 or older. Even if you got it before age 16, you need an additional dose before entering college.

**The meningococcal conjugate vaccine is especially important for college freshmen living in dorms.**



State of California • Health and Human Services Agency

Department of Public Health • Immunization Branch • 850 Marina Bay Parkway • Richmond, CA 94804

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## How Many People Get the Disease? Who Is Likely To Get It?

Meningococcal disease is a rare but serious disease. An estimated 1,000 people get meningococcal disease each year in the U.S., with 130 to 200 of them in California. After infancy, older adolescents and young adults have the highest rate of meningococcal disease. College freshmen living in dorms are particularly at risk.

## How Serious Is It?

Even if treated, 10–12% of people who get meningococcal disease will die from it. Of the survivors, 11–19% lose their arms or legs, become deaf or brain damaged, or suffer other complications.

## “It could happen to anyone. Get immunized.”

—Jonathan Deguzman  
meningococcal disease survivor



## How Are Meningococcal Bacteria Spread?

The bacteria are spread from person to person through air droplets. Close contact such as kissing, coughing, smoking, and living in crowded conditions (like dorms) can increase your risk of getting the disease.

Overall, 5–10% of the U.S. population has the meningococcal bacteria in their throat, but only a few of them get sick. No one knows why some people get sick and others don't.

## How Can I Protect Myself?

You can protect yourself by:

- not sharing items that have touched someone else's mouth, such as cups, bottles, cigarettes, lip balm, and eating utensils;
- not smoking; and
- getting the meningococcal conjugate vaccine. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends one dose at age 11 or 12 and a booster dose at age 16. **If you missed your shot after turning 16, get it now.**

## How Effective Are the Vaccines?

Meningococcal vaccines are at least 85% effective at preventing 4 of the 5 most common forms of meningococcal disease.

Ask your health care provider about the benefits and risks of meningococcal vaccines.

### For more information:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: [www.cdc.gov/vaccines](http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines)

American College Health Association: [www.acha.org](http://www.acha.org)

**Ask your healthcare provider or student health service!**