

Meningococcal Disease and Vaccination Information *Saint Joseph's College Health Services*

Required Meningococcal Disease Information Review

The State of Indiana, along with more than 30 other states, has enacted legislation that requires colleges and universities to distribute information to students and parents about meningococcal disease and the availability of a safe and effective meningococcal vaccine. To attend Saint Joseph's College this fall, all 18-year old students are required by law to review this material and sign the statement on the reverse of this information sheet. For students under 18, the student's legal guardian must sign the statement.

All Students Should Consider Protection Against Meningococcal Disease

The State of Indiana requires all students attending Indiana colleges and universities to obtain immunizations against a number of very serious diseases – diphtheria, tetanus, measles, mumps, and rubella. Now, state law also requires all students and/or their parents, to *consider* vaccination against meningococcal disease for the student; and that you or a parent sign a statement that the college has provided you with information about the risks of the disease and the availability and effectiveness of vaccination.

Reasons for Concern

Although meningococcal disease is a rare disease, it is a potentially fatal disease. What makes it particularly dangerous is that it often begins with flu-like symptoms that are often ignored; but, unlike the flu, meningococcal disease can get worse very rapidly. Even though this is not a common disease, the national Centers for Disease Control (CDC) urges college students to inform themselves of the risks of the disease and understand that vaccinations are very effective, while the consequences of contracting the disease are severe: Up to 1 in 5 people who are infected will die; while of those who survive, 1 in 5 will suffer permanent disabilities. This infection can lead to death within 48 to 72 hours.

College Students Are More at Risk

Meningococcal disease strikes about 3,000 Americans each year and is responsible for approximately 300 deaths annually in the US. It is estimated that 100 to 125 cases of meningococcal disease occur annually on college campuses and 5 to 15 students die as a result. Students living in residence halls are at a modestly increased risk, and college freshmen are the most at risk for contracting this disease. However, the rates of meningococcal disease, even in this highest risk population, remain very low. For all students living in a residence hall, the rate is 2.2 cases per 100,000 students; for freshmen the rate goes up to 4.6 cases in 100,000. (National College Health Risk Behavior Survey – US, 1995)

What is Meningococcal Disease?

Meningococcal disease is a bacterial infection. It can cause meningitis – severe swelling of the brain and spinal cord. It can also lead to sepsis – a dangerous and potentially life-threatening blood infection. The bacteria are spread indirectly through droplets in the air from coughing or sneezing, or from direct contact with respiratory secretions from an infected person.

The Vaccination is Very Effective

Vaccination is recommended by the CDC for all people at increased risk for contracting meningococcal disease. Many medical advisory organizations recommend vaccination for college students: The American College Health Association, The American Academy of Pediatrics, and the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices among others. Although vaccination cannot *guarantee* protection against the disease, it has been shown to *greatly increase* a person's immunity. Although vaccination enhances immunity to the strains of meningococcal disease that cause the largest percentage of cases, it is also important to know that vaccination does not *eliminate* risk.

The Vaccination is Considered to be Safe by Health Professionals

The vaccine is safe and adverse reactions are largely mild and infrequent, consisting of redness and pain at the site of the injection lasting up to two days. There are a very small number of people for whom vaccination would not be recommended, and it is suggested that students and parents discuss the issue of immunization with the student's primary care provider.

For More Information, Visit These Web Sites:

www.cdc.gov/nip

www.meningococcaldisease.com

www.immunizationinfo.org

**Acknowledgement of
Saint Joseph's College's
Providing
Meningococcal Disease and Vaccination Information**

Indiana Code

Section 4. IC 20-12-71-13.5 states in part that:

“A postsecondary institution in which an individual intends to enroll shall provide detailed information on the risks associated with meningococcal disease and the availability and effectiveness of vaccination...”

Student's Name: _____ Year in School: F S J S

Mailing Address: _____

Student's Date of Birth: ____/____/____

Please Sign as Appropriate

- **The student named above is *under 18-years old***, and I am this student's parent or legal guardian. I have received and reviewed the information regarding meningococcal disease and vaccine provided by Saint Joseph's College.

Signed: _____ Date: ____/____/____

- **I am the student named above and *am at least 18-years old***. I have received and reviewed the information regarding meningococcal disease and vaccine provided by Saint Joseph's College.

Signed: _____ Date: ____/____/____

- **The above named student was vaccinated for meningococcal meningitis on:**

Date: ____/____/____

Vaccine type: _____