

Facts About Meningococcal Meningitis

- Disease which attacks the membranes that surround the brain and spinal cord (meningitis) or poisons the blood (meningococemia)
- Caused by bacteria called *Neisseria meningitides*.
- Strikes nearly 3,000 Americans each year: 10-12% of them will die.
- **Nearly 30% of all U.S. cases occur among adolescents & young adults; studies show as many as 1 in 4 of them may die.**
- Almost 20% of survivors suffer long-term disabilities, including brain damage, hearing loss, limb amputations, organ damage/failure

Special Risk Factors

Lifestyle factors common among adolescents and young adults are often linked to the disease

- Communal/crowded living conditions; boarding schools, overnight camps, college dorms
- Moving to new residence or attendance at new school or camp with children from geographically diverse areas
- Exposure to cigarette smoke; passive and active
- Irregular sleeping patterns

Symptoms

Early symptoms resemble the flu and can include:

- High fever
- Headache
- Stiff neck
- Nausea
- Exhaustion
- Rash may appear in later stages

Chris Maier
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What Can Be Done to Protect Teens?

- Vaccination is the most effective way. It can prevent most cases among adolescents and young adults.

Vaccine Recommendations

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommended routine meningococcal immunization (one shot) for

- All adolescents 11 through 18 years of age.
- College freshmen living in dormitories.
- Others who wish to be immunized should speak to their health care provider.
- Arizona requires the vaccination for all students entering 6th grade. The vaccine is available at the Pima County Health Department clinics for students under 19 at a reduced cost.

Find out More

- National Meningitis Association: www.nmaus.org
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: www.cdc.gov
- Leslie Maier: www.lmaier@cox.net