



## Meningococcal Disease: Protect Your Child

Public health authorities recommend that teenagers and college-bound students be immunized against a potentially fatal bacterial infection called meningococcal disease, a type of meningitis.

Meningococcal disease is a rare but potentially fatal bacterial infection that can cause severe swelling of the brain and spinal cord (meningitis) or a serious blood infection (meningococemia). Meningococcal disease strikes up to 3,000 Americans each year; nearly 30 percent of these cases are among teenagers and college students. Up to 83 percent of all cases among teens and college students may potentially be prevented through immunization, the most effective way to prevent this disease. A meningococcal vaccine is available that protects against four out of five strains of bacterium that cause meningococcal

those who survive, up to 20 percent may endure permanent disabilities, including brain damage, deafness and limb amputations.

Lifestyle factors common among teenagers, college students and military personnel are believed to put them at increased risk of contracting meningococcal disease. These lifestyle factors include crowded living situations (for example, dormitories, and sleep-away camps), active or passive smoking and irregular sleeping habits. Teens should avoid sharing eating utensils and drinking out of the same container, since infections may spread through this type of close contact.

To learn more about meningococcal disease, vaccine information, and public health resources visit the following web sites.

<http://www.cdc.gov/meningitis/index.html> – This CDC website includes the CDC recommendations and information on the meningococcal vaccine.

<http://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/communicable/factsheets/index.htm> -The Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services communicable disease fact Sheet

<http://dhs.wisconsin.gov/LocalHealth/index.htm> - A list of local Wisconsin public health departments and contact information.

American Academy of Family Physicians, [www.aafp.org](http://www.aafp.org)

American Academy of Pediatrics, [www.aap.org](http://www.aap.org)

Meningitis Foundation of America, [www.musa.org](http://www.musa.org)

National Meningitis Association, [www.nmaus.org](http://www.nmaus.org)