

From your NCH School Nurse

What is meningococcal meningitis?

It is a serious bacterial infection that strikes between 1000 and 2600 Americans each year. Although rare, this disease can cause meningitis (swelling of the brain or spinal cord) or meningococemia (blood infection).

Who is at risk for getting meningococcal meningitis?

Preteens and teens, college students and young adults are at greater risk of getting this disease and are more likely to die compared with other age groups. Death rates from this disease are up to 5 times higher in teenagers and young adults (ages 15-24 years) compared with other age groups.

How do you get meningococcal meningitis?

This disease is spread from person to person through close contact. Everyday activities like sharing a drinking glass, eating utensils, kissing, or living in close quarters such as college dormitories can put even healthy people at greater risk.

What are the symptoms of meningococcal meningitis?

Meningococcal meningitis can be hard to recognize, especially in its early stages, because symptoms are similar to those of more common viral illnesses. Unlike more common illnesses, the disease can progress quickly and may cause death within 24 hrs. after symptoms appear. Symptoms may include high fever, severe headache, stiff neck, confusion, vomiting, exhaustion, and/or a rash.

How can you help prevent your child from developing meningococcal meningitis?

Vaccination is safe and effective and the best way to help protect preteens and teens from the disease. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommend meningococcal vaccine for:

- **Preteens and teens 11 through 18 years of age**
- **College freshmen living in dormitories**
- **Children 2 through 10 years of age who are at increased risk or if recommended by their health-care providers and parents**

The vaccine can be obtained through your health care provider or at the Collier County Health Department at no charge for those 18 year of age and under.

To learn more, visit: <http://www.voicesofmeningitis.com/get-the-facts-teen-at-risk.html>