

# MENINGITIS ON CAMPUS

## Know Your Risks

### Learn About Vaccination

Certain college students are at increased risk for meningococcal disease, a potential fatal bacterial infection commonly referred to as meningitis.

In fact, freshmen living in dorms are found to have a six fold increased risk for the disease.

A U.S. health advisory panel recommends that college students, particularly freshmen living in residence halls, learn more about meningitis and vaccination.

- **What is meningococcal meningitis?** Meningitis is rare. But when it strikes, this potentially fatal bacterial disease can lead to swelling of fluid surrounding the brain and spinal column as well as severe and permanent disabilities, such as hearing loss, brain damage, seizures, limb amputation and even death.
- **How is it spread?** Meningococcal meningitis is spread through air via respiratory secretions or close contact with an infected person. This can include coughing, sneezing, kissing or sharing items like utensils, cigarettes and drinking glasses.
- **What are the symptoms?** Symptoms of meningococcal meningitis often resemble the flu and can include high fever, severe headache, stiff neck, rash, nausea, vomiting, lethargy and confusion.
- **Who is at risk?** Certain college students, particularly freshmen who live in dormitories or residence halls, have been found to have an increased risk for meningococcal meningitis. Other undergraduates can also consider vaccination to reduce their risk for the disease.
- **Can meningitis be prevented?** Yes. Safe and effective vaccines are available to protect against four the five most commons strains of the disease. Then vaccine called Menomune provides protection for approximately three to five years. A newer vaccine called Menactra is also now available. Either vaccine is acceptable. Your doctor or local health department can provide current updated information on newer vaccines as they become available. As with any vaccine, vaccination against meningitis may not protect 100% of all susceptible individuals.
- **Does Young Harris College offer the meningococcal meningitis vaccine on campus?** No. Please check with your local County Health Department or family doctor to obtain the vaccine. Be aware that students who are under 19 years old can usually get the vaccine at a much lower cost than those nineteen or over.

**For more information:** To learn more about meningitis and the vaccine, visit the websites of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov) or the American College Health Association, [www.acha.org](http://www.acha.org)