

# Meningitis

## —How to stay healthy on campus



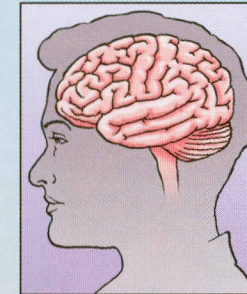
## Meningitis is on the rise among college students.

It's a contagious disease that can kill.

### Meningitis affects the brain and spinal cord.

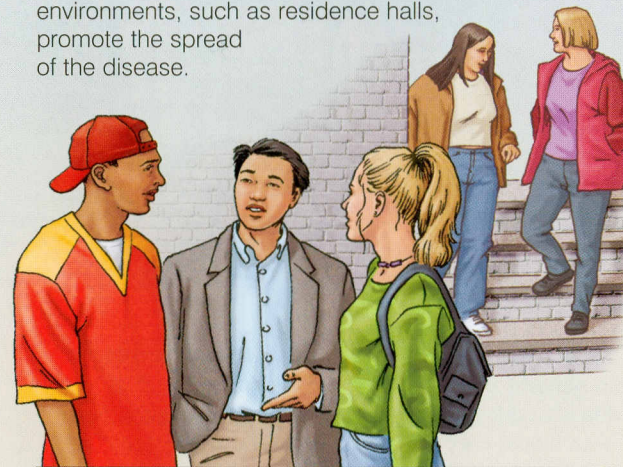
It causes the membrane around these to get inflamed. Meningitis can result in:

- brain damage
- hearing loss
- vision loss
- death.



### What puts college students at risk?

Researchers are trying to learn exactly why meningitis is becoming more common among college students. It is known that crowded environments, such as residence halls, promote the spread of the disease.



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## There are 2 common types of meningitis.

### Viral meningitis

is the more common type. It usually isn't life-threatening. Viral meningitis:

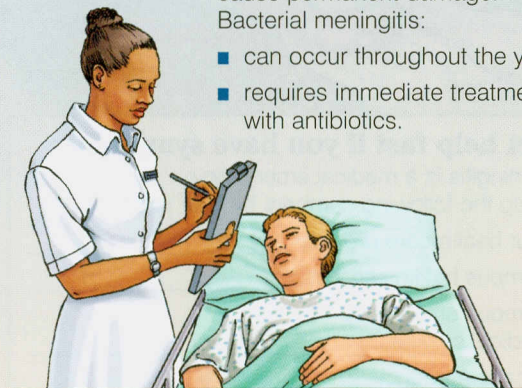
- usually occurs in late summer and early fall
- cannot be treated with antibiotics
- usually does not result in hospitalization
- can severely weaken a person, though a full recovery is likely with proper care at home.



### Bacterial meningitis

is rarer—and more dangerous. Untreated, it may be fatal or cause permanent damage. Bacterial meningitis:

- can occur throughout the year
- requires immediate treatment with antibiotics.



### How does a person get meningitis?

In general, through contact with:

- droplets from an infected person's sneeze or cough
- the saliva of an infected person (through kissing, drinking from the same glass or sharing a cigarette, for example).

You don't get meningitis just by breathing the same air as someone who has meningitis.

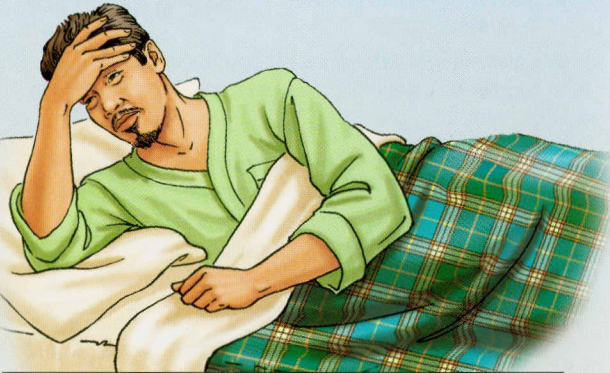


# Learn the symptoms.

Meningitis can easily be mistaken for the flu. But without proper treatment, meningitis can worsen quickly.

## Common symptoms include:

- high fever
- headache
- stiff neck
- nausea
- vomiting
- sleepiness
- confusion
- a rash.



**Get help fast if you have symptoms.**

Meningitis is a medical emergency. Keep the following numbers by your phone:

Your health-care provider \_\_\_\_\_

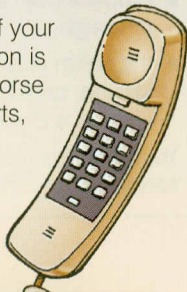
Campus health services \_\_\_\_\_

Campus emergency medical services \_\_\_\_\_

Local emergency medical services \_\_\_\_\_

## Don't delay getting help.

It's critical to find out if the cause of your symptoms is meningitis. Quick action is urgent because the disease gets worse very fast. The sooner treatment starts, the better the chances for a complete recovery.

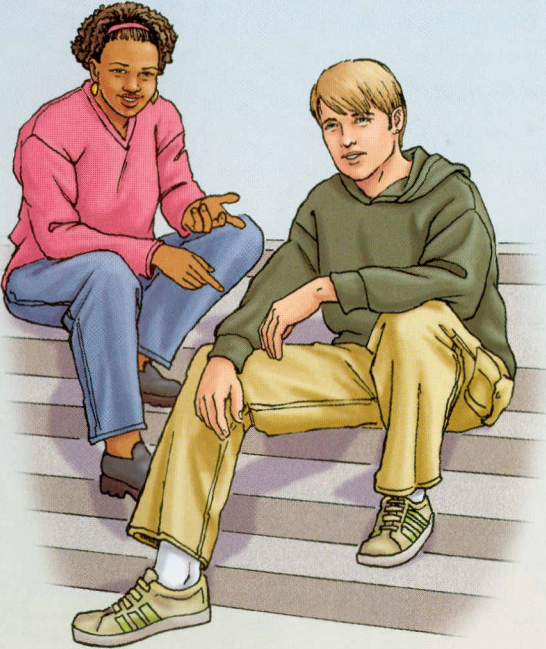


# A vaccine may help protect you

from certain strains of bacterial meningitis.

## Should I get it?

The American College Health Association recommends that college students, especially first-year students living in residence halls, consider getting the vaccine. But people with certain health conditions should not be vaccinated. Ask your health-care provider if it's an option for you.



## Is it safe?

In general, vaccines in the U.S. are very safe. Your health-care provider can tell you about any possible risks or side effects. Getting meningitis is far more dangerous than getting the vaccine.

## How much does it cost?

Prices usually range from \$60-\$90. That's what you might pay for a few concert tickets or dinners out. For the price of a few nights' fun, you can get protection that may save your life. (If you have health insurance, see if the vaccine is covered.)

# A healthy lifestyle

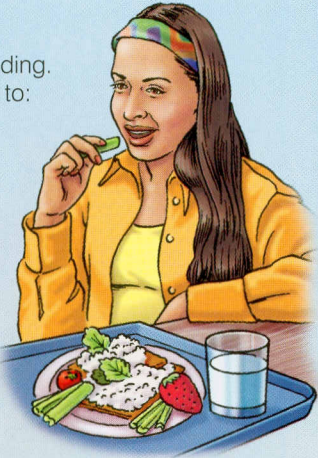
is another important defense against meningitis.

## Take care of yourself.

A college schedule is demanding. It's more important than ever to:

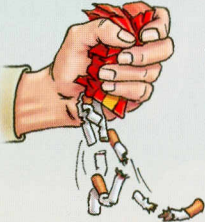
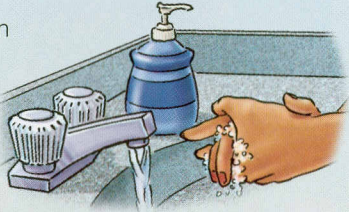
- Eat a variety of healthy foods each day.
- Drink plenty of water.
- Get enough sleep.
- Exercise regularly.

Talk to your health-care provider before starting an exercise program.



## Help yourself stay healthy.

- Wash your hands often using soap. This is one of the best ways to avoid getting sick.
- If you smoke, make a plan to quit. Avoid secondhand smoke, too. Smoking and exposure to secondhand smoke may weaken your immune system—and raise your risk of meningitis.
- Avoid alcohol—it also may weaken your immune system. Some studies have linked drinking to a higher risk of meningitis.



**Avoid sharing personal items, such as toothbrushes or cups. Meningitis and other illnesses can be spread this way.**

# Some questions and answers

## Does getting the vaccine guarantee I won't get meningitis?

No vaccine is 100% effective. The meningitis vaccine:

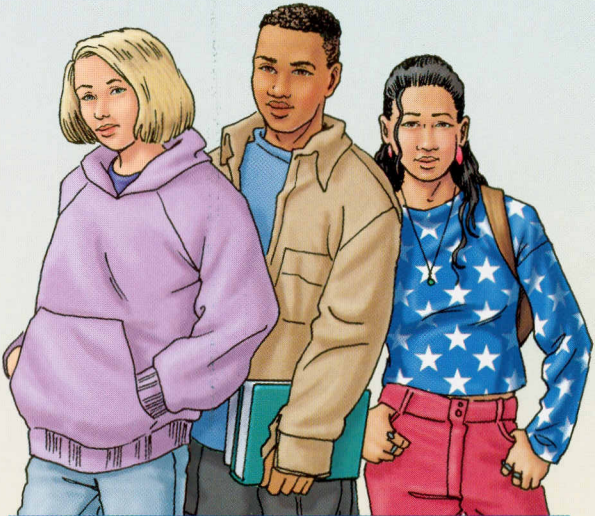
- protects against certain strains of bacterial meningitis
- should protect you for several years, but it's not lifelong protection.

Your health-care provider can tell you if and when you'll need another vaccine. And always call for emergency help if you have symptoms of meningitis—even if you have had the vaccine.

## How can I learn more about meningitis and the vaccine?

Contact the health center at your school. Or contact:

- your local or state health department
- area hospitals
- the Meningitis Foundation of America at 1-800-668-1129 [www.musa.org](http://www.musa.org).



**Protect yourself—and your future!**