

## RUTGERS UNIVERSITY MENINGOCOCCAL DISEASE INFORMATION

### OVERVIEW/KEY POINTS:

- The New Jersey Department of Health (NJDOH), local health officials, and Rutgers Student Health are investigating two cases of meningococcal disease associated with Rutgers University-New Brunswick. Meningococcal disease is an infection caused by the organism *Neisseria meningitidis*.
  - The NJDOH was notified that a student was hospitalized on April 29, 2016, with meningococcal disease. The student is currently receiving treatment and is recovering. Close contacts of this case are being identified and notified to receive prophylactic (preventive) antibiotics.
  - The first case of meningococcal disease was hospitalized on March 18, 2016. This student has fully recovered.
- Both cases are caused by *Neisseria meningitidis* serogroup (type) B (MenB). Cases of meningococcal disease can occur sporadically in college settings since this population has an increased risk for meningococcal disease. However, public health officials are investigating to determine if these cases might be linked. The cases are being interviewed to determine if there are commonalities. In addition, special tests are being done by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to determine if the bacteria are genetically similar.
- Vaccination is the best protection against meningococcal disease. However, the vaccine routinely given protects against four serogroups – A, C, W, and Y. The vaccine does not provide protection against MenB.
- There are two safe and effective vaccines that provide protection against MenB. You should contact your healthcare provider or Rutgers Student Health to discuss vaccination against MenB.
- At this time, there are no recommendations to cancel any activities or scheduled events on the Rutgers University Campus. There are also no recommendations for the surrounding community to avoid contact with Rutgers University or Rutgers University students. The bacteria that cause meningococcal disease are less infectious than the viruses that cause the flu. The bacteria are spread from person-to-person through the exchange of saliva (spit), coughs, and sneezes. You must be in direct (close) contact with an infected person's secretions to be exposed.
- Individuals should remain vigilant (have increased awareness) for signs and symptoms of meningococcal disease. Individuals who are ill should not attend school or work to prevent the spread of disease to others. Practice healthy habits such as washing your hands frequently, and covering coughs and sneezes. Avoid sharing eating utensils, drinks, cigarettes with others. Contact your healthcare provider immediately if you experience symptoms of meningococcal disease since early diagnosis and treatment are important.

### DISEASE INFORMATION

#### **What is meningococcal disease?**

Meningococcal (muh-nin-jo-cok-ul) disease is a serious illness caused by a type of bacteria called *Neisseria meningitidis*. The disease may result in inflammation of the lining of the brain and spinal cord (meningococcal meningitis) and/or a serious blood infection (meningococcal septicemia). Meningococcal disease can become deadly in 48 hours or less. Even with treatment, 10-15% of people die. Others have long-term complications such as brain damage, learning problems, skin scarring, hearing loss, and loss of arms and/or legs.

#### **What are common symptoms of meningococcal disease?**

- Confusion
- Fatigue (feeling very tired)
- Fever and chills
- In later stages, a dark purple rash
- Nausea and vomiting
- Rapid breathing
- Sensitivity to light
- Severe headache
- Stiff neck

For more info, visit <http://www.cdc.gov/meningococcal/about/symptoms.html>

### **How does meningococcal disease spread?**

The bacteria are spread from person-to-person through the exchange of saliva (spit), coughs, and sneezes. You must be in direct (close) or lengthy contact with an infected person's secretions to be exposed. Examples of close contact include:

- Kissing
- Living in the same house
- Sharing cigarettes, drinks, eating utensils or food
- Sleeping in the same residence (sleep overs)

About 1 out of 10 people carry meningococcal bacteria in their nose and throat, but do not get sick. These people are known as carriers. Although carriers do not have any signs or symptoms, they can still spread the bacteria and make others sick. Since so many people carry the bacteria, most cases of meningococcal disease appear to be random and are not linked to other cases.

Although anyone can get meningococcal disease, adolescents and college students who live in dormitories are at an increased risk. The bacteria that cause meningococcal disease are less infectious than the viruses that cause the common cold or flu.

### **Is there medication to prevent infection?**

People in the same household, roommates, or anyone with direct contact with a patient's respiratory secretions would be considered at increased risk of getting infected from someone with meningococcal disease. People who are close contacts of a person with meningococcal disease should receive antibiotics to prevent them from becoming ill. This is known as prophylaxis. Casual contact, as might occur in a regular classroom or office setting, is not usually significant enough to cause concern.

### **How can meningococcal disease be prevented?**

Meningococcal conjugate vaccine is the best way to prevent meningococcal disease. The vaccine protects against four of the five types of bacteria (A, C, W, and Y) that cause almost all cases of meningococcal disease worldwide. When you are 11-12 years old, you will need the first dose. When you are 16 years old, you will need a booster shot (an additional dose).

There are also vaccines to prevent against meningococcal type B (MenB) disease. If you are 10 or older and at increased risk, it is recommended that you receive a MenB vaccination. When you are 16 through 23 years old, you can receive a MenB vaccination, in addition to the meningococcal conjugate vaccine, to have broader protection. Ask your healthcare provider if you should receive this vaccine.

## **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

### **Where can I get additional information?**

- Your health care provider
- Your local health department
  - <http://www.state.nj.us/health/lh/directory/lhdselectcounty.shtml>
- NJ Department of Health
  - <http://nj.gov/health/cd/index.shtml>
  - <http://www.nj.gov/health/cd/meningo/index.shtml>

Meningococcal Disease: Are You Protected? Brochure

- [http://www.nj.gov/health/cd/documents/faq/meningococcal\\_faq.pdf](http://www.nj.gov/health/cd/documents/faq/meningococcal_faq.pdf)
- Rutgers Student Health
  - <http://health.rutgers.edu/>
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
  - <http://www.cdc.gov/meningococcal/index.html>