



## Important Information Regarding Bacterial Meningitis

The following information is provided to all incoming college students in the state of Texas. Bacterial Meningitis is a serious, potentially deadly disease that can progress quickly. Meningitis causes inflammation of the membranes that surround the brain and spinal cord and can also infect the blood. Each year approximately 3,000 Americans contract this disease. Of these, 100-125 cases occur on college campuses with anywhere from 5-15 resulting in death. While there is a treatment for this disease, those who survive may develop severe health problems or disabilities. To avoid this risk, every precaution should be observed.

### WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS?

- High Fever
- Lethargy
- Nausea
- Rash or purple patches on skin
- Severe headache
- Seizures
- Light sensitivity
- Vomiting
- Confusion and sleepiness
- Stiff neck

There may be a rash of tiny, red-purple spots caused by bleeding under the skin. These can occur anywhere on the body.

**Additional symptoms can be indicative of higher risk. If these symptoms appear seek immediate medical attention.**

### HOW IS BACTERIAL MENINGITIS DIAGNOSED?

- Diagnosis is made by a medical provider and is usually based on a combination of clinical symptoms and laboratory results from spinal fluid and blood tests.
- **Early diagnosis and treatment can greatly improve the likelihood of recovery.**

### HOW IS THE DISEASE TRANSMITTED?

- The disease is transmitted when people exchange saliva (such as by kissing, or by sharing drinking containers, utensils, cigarettes, toothbrushes, etc.) or come in contact with respiratory or throat secretions.

### HOW DO YOU INCREASE YOUR RISK OF GETTING BACTERIAL MENINGITIS?

- Exposure to saliva by sharing cigarettes, water bottles, eating utensils, food, kissing, etc.
- Living in close conditions (such as sharing a room/suite in a dorm or group home).

### WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE CONSEQUENCES OF THE DISEASE?

- Death (*in 8 to 24 hours from perfectly well to dead*)
- Limb damage (fingers, toes, arms, legs) that requires amputation
- Kidney failure
- Convulsions
- Coma
- Permanent brain damage
- Hearing loss, blindness
- Learning disability
- Gangrene

### CAN THE DISEASE BE TREATED?

- Antibiotic treatment, if received early, can save lives and chances of recovery are increased. However, permanent disability or death can still occur.
- Vaccinations are available and should be considered for:
  - Those living in close quarters
  - College students 25 years old or younger
- Vaccinations are effective against 4 of the 5 most common bacterial types that cause 70% of the disease in the U.S. (but does not protect against all types of meningitis).
- Vaccinations take 7-10 days to become effective, with protection lasting 3-5 years.
- The cost of vaccine varies, so check with your health provider.
- Vaccination is very safe – most common side effects are redness and minor pain at injection site for up to two days.
- Vaccination is available through Texas A&M University Department of Student Health Services, at the A.P. Beutel Health Center.

### HOW CAN I FIND OUT MORE INFORMATION?

- Contact your own health care provider.
- Contact your Texas A&M University Student Health Services at [979-458-8345](tel:979-458-8345).
- Contact your local or regional Texas Department of Health office at [979-361-4440](tel:979-361-4440).
- Contact web sites: [www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dbmd/diseaseinfo](http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dbmd/diseaseinfo); [www.acha.org](http://www.acha.org)