

Bacterial Meningitis

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS?

- Sudden onset of high fever
- Severe headache
- Stiff neck
- Rash or purple patches on skin
- Light sensitivity
- Confusion and sleepiness
- Lethargy
- Vomiting
- Nausea
- Seizures

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

The more symptoms, the higher the risk, so when 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)
- Permanent brain damage
- Kidney failure
- Learning disability
- Hearing loss, blindness
- Limb damage (fingers, toes, arms, legs) that requires amputation
- Gangrene
- Coma
- Convulsions

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.
- **New Texas law MANDATES the Meningitis vaccine for all new, transfers, or re-enrolling college students less than 30 years of age, whether living in the dorm or commuting.**
- 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).
- The cost of the vaccine and availability varies, so check with your local health care provider.
- The vaccination is very safe – most common side effects are redness and minor pain at injection site for up to two days.
- Gregg County Health Department will administer the vaccine free for college students who are in financial need. However, state funding has limited the supply of the vaccine for adults.

Bacterial Meningitis

This information is being provided to all new college students in the state of Texas. Bacterial Meningitis is a serious, potentially deadly disease that can progress extremely fast – so take the utmost caution. It is an inflammation of the membranes that surround the brain and spinal cord. The bacteria that causes meningitis can also infect the blood. The disease which strikes about 3,000 Americans each year, including 100-125 on college campuses, leads to approximately 5-15 deaths among college students every year. There is a treatment, but those who survive may develop severe health problems or disabilities.

HOW CAN I FIND OUT MORE

- Contact your own health care provider.
- Contact your Student Health Center at (903) 233-4445; fax: (903) 233-4403 or email: JerrieReynolds@letu.edu.
- Contact your local or regional Texas Department of State Health Services office at (800) 807-4705.
- For the latest updates contact web sites: www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dbmd/diseaseinfo; www.acha.org

Texas Education Code, Section 51.9192, Subchapter Z, establishes the requirement for the bacterial meningitis vaccination for students enrolling in an institution of higher education after January 1, 2012. This applies to any student in the classroom who is less than 30 years of age. Proof of receiving the vaccine within the last 5 years must be documented 10 days prior to the start of classes. Exemptions to the immunizations are available at

<http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/immunize/school/default.shtm#exclusions>

This law applies to first time students, transfers, and re-enrollment students, whether commuting or residential.