

***It is mandatory for all students attending Susquehanna University and residing in a residence hall to have the meningitis vaccine.***

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## **Meningitis Information**

College students are at increased risk for meningococcal disease, a potentially fatal bacterial infection commonly referred to as meningitis. In fact, students living in residence halls are found to have a six fold increase risk for the disease. The American College Health Association, the American Academy of Pediatrics, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices recommends that college students, living in residence halls, learn more about meningitis and vaccination. At least 70% of all cases of meningococcal disease in college students are vaccine preventable. As of July 10, 2002, it is now mandatory for all students who reside in a residence hall, to have the vaccine.

Many states have recently passed this legislation mandating the meningitis vaccine for all students living in residence halls. Pennsylvania has legislation (Senate Bill 955) stating all students either have the vaccine or sign a declination statement after having received the information concerning the benefits of receiving the meningitis vaccine.

- ❖ **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 the air via respiratory secretions or close contact with an infected person. This can include coughing, sneezing, kissing, or sharing items such as 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.
- ❖ **Can meningitis be prevented?** Yes. A safe and effective vaccine is available to protect against four of the five most common strains of the disease. The vaccine provides protection for approximately three to five years. Adverse reactions to the meningitis vaccine are mild and infrequent, consisting primarily of redness and pain at the injection site and rarely a fever. As with any vaccine, vaccination against meningitis may not protect 100 percent of all susceptible individuals. It does not protect against viral meningitis.
- ❖ **Where can I get more information?** To learn more about meningitis and the vaccine, visit the Susquehanna University Student Health Center or call (570) 374-9164. You can also visit the Web sites of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC),

[www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dbmd/diseaseinfo](http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dbmd/diseaseinfo), and the American College Health Association,  
[www.acha.org](http://www.acha.org).

I have read and understand the information about meningitis, and I decline the meningitis vaccine at this time. I understand that, if I decide to receive the vaccine in the future, I can receive it at the Health Center, provided the vaccine is available, and the cost can be billed to my student account.

Print Student's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Student's Social Security Number or Student ID Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Student: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_