

Meningococcal Information Form

College students are at increased risk for meningococcal disease, a potentially fatal bacterial infection commonly referred to as *Meningitis*. In fact, freshmen students living in residence halls are found to have a six-fold increased risk for the disease. The American College Health Association, The American Academy of Pediatrics and The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) recommend that college students, particularly freshmen living in residence halls, learn more about Meningitis and the vaccine. At least 70% of all cases of meningococcal disease in college students are vaccine preventable.

Many states have passed legislation mandating the meningococcal vaccine for freshmen living in residence halls. Pennsylvania has enacted legislation (Senate Bill 95, the College and University Student Vaccination Act) requiring all students who will be residing in university owned housing provide documentation that they have received the vaccine or sign a declination statement after receiving information regarding the benefits of the meningitis vaccine.

- **What is meningococcal meningitis?** Bacterial meningitis is rare. When it strikes, however, 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 by direct contact with infected individuals (for example, sharing food, drinks or cigarettes and kissing) or prolonged close contact with respiratory secretions (for example, sleeping in the same room).
- **What are the symptoms?** Symptoms of meningococcal meningitis often resemble the flu and can include high fever, headache, stiff neck, rash, nausea, vomiting, lethargy and confusion.
- **Who is at risk?** Certain college students, particularly freshmen who live in residence halls, have been found to have an increased risk for meningococcal meningitis. Other university students 25 years of age or younger should also consider vaccination to reduce their risk for the disease.
- **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 up to five years. Recently, **recommendations were made by the CDC for a 2nd (booster) shot for all entering undergraduate students who received their 1st shot before their 16th birthday.** Graduate students should receive their vaccine within 5 years of matriculation. 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.

For more information: To learn more about meningitis and the vaccine, we recommend visiting the American College Health Association at www.acha.org/projects_programs/meningitis/index.cfm.

Students planning to live in campus housing who either:

- **decline the meningitis vaccine *OR***
- **wish to receive the vaccine on Undergraduate Move-In Day or at Graduate Student Orientation *OR***
- **have received only a single meningitis vaccine before their 16th birthday**

MUST complete and return this form by June 30th. You will NOT be given your room key on Move-In Day if you fail to comply.

PLEASE PRINT, SIGN AND MAIL THIS FORM TO THE LEHIGH UNIVERSITY HEALTH & WELLNESS CENTER

PLEASE CHECK THE STATEMENT THAT APPLIES:

- I wish to receive the meningitis vaccine* as administered by the Lehigh University Health & Wellness Center. The cost of the vaccine is \$110.00 and can be paid by Cash, Check or Bursar Bill. By checking this box, I am requesting that the Health & Wellness Center reserve a dose for me.
 - I am an undergraduate student and would like to receive the vaccine on Move-In Day
 - I am a graduate student and wish to receive the vaccine during Graduate Student Orientation
- I have read and understand the information about meningococcal disease and *I decline the meningitis vaccine* at this time for religious or other reasons. I understand that if I decide to receive the vaccine in the future, I can contact the Health & Wellness Center.
 - Religious
 - Other
- Even though I have already been vaccinated with the meningococcal vaccination, I understand that I am not in compliance with the new recommendations from the CDC and *I decline the meningitis vaccine* at this time.

*If you are under 18 years of age and declining vaccination, your parent/guardian must review the meningococcal information and sign as well.

Print Name

Signature of Student

Date

Lehigh ID Number

Date of Birth

Signature of Parent/Guardian

Date

(Required if student is less than 18 years old)

Return to:

Lehigh University Health & Wellness Center
36 University Drive
Bethlehem, PA 18015
P 610.758.3870
F 610.758.5833