

# Meningitis Information Letter

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## Greetings!

As the Coordinator of Health Services at Concordia University, Nebraska, I am writing to inform you about meningococcal disease, a potentially fatal bacterial infection commonly referred to as meningitis.

Because this disease can have serious implications, in May 2003, Nebraska enacted legislation that requires all newly enrolled students who will live on campus to be informed about this disease and the available vaccine. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices, the American College Health Association (ACHA), and the American Academy of Pediatrics also recommend that college students, particularly freshmen living in dormitories and residence halls, be educated about meningitis and the benefits of vaccination. Studies show that college students, particularly freshmen living in dormitories, have a six fold increased risk for meningitis. The recommendation further states that information about the disease and vaccination is appropriate for other undergraduate students who also wish to reduce their risk for the disease.

Meningitis is rare. However, when it strikes, its flu-like symptoms make diagnosis difficult. If not treated early, meningitis can lead to swelling of the 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. Symptoms of meningitis include: headache, fever, stiff neck, extreme fatigue, nausea, vomiting, and sensitivity to light.

A vaccine is available that protects against four types of the bacteria that cause meningitis in the United States—types A, C, Y and W-135. These types account for nearly two thirds of meningitis cases among college students. I encourage you and your student to learn more about meningitis and the vaccine. More information can be found at [www.cune.edu/healthcenter](http://www.cune.edu/healthcenter). You can also find information about the disease and vaccine at the following web sites: the CDC [www.cdc.gov/meningitis/index.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/meningitis/index.htm), and the ACHA [www.acha.org](http://www.acha.org) and [www.immunize.org/vis/meninob.pdf](http://www.immunize.org/vis/meninob.pdf).

If you would like your child to receive the vaccine on campus, please see the following form. For those who do not have health insurance or for those whose insurance does not cover this vaccine, two other options to consider include the Vaccine for Children Program through your local health department and a medication assistance program. This medication assistance program is available to assist qualified persons with the cost of the vaccine. To learn more about this program and how to apply, contact the National Organization of Rare Disorders at 877 798 8716, e-mail [nnadig@rarediseases.org](mailto:nnadig@rarediseases.org) or [www.rarediseases.org/programs/medication](http://www.rarediseases.org/programs/medication) or visit the Health Center on campus.

For more information, please feel free to contact our Health Center and/or consult your child's physician.

Let us know if we may be of any additional assistance.

Sincerely,



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