CHRISTOPHER NEWPORT UNIVERSITY

MENINGOCOCCAL VACCINE WAIVER FORM

MUST BE COMPLETED AND SUBMITTED IF STUDENT DOES NOT RECEIVE VACCINE

MENINGOCOCCAL DISEASE (Meningitis)

Recent legislation passed by the General Assembly of Virginia and signed into law on March 20, 2001, requires vaccination against meningococcal disease for all incoming full-time students at Christopher Newport University and other public four-year institutions of higher education.

Meningococcal disease is a potentially fatal bacterial infection commonly referred to as meningitis. Meningococcal disease is rare. However, its initial flu-like symptoms make diagnosis difficult. If not treated early, the disease can lead to brain damage, vital organ failure, permanent disability and even death. Cases of meningococcal disease among teens and young adults 15 to 24 years of age have more than doubled since 1991. Recent studies indicate that college students living in dormitories, and particularly freshman dormitory residents, are at increased risk of infection. An estimated 100 to 125 cases of meningococcal disease occur on college campuses each year. Of those students infected, as many as 15 may die.

The meningococcal vaccine protects against four of the five strains of the bacteria that cause meningococcal disease (strains A, C, Y and W-135). It is estimated that vaccination would prevent approximately two-thirds of all cases of meningococcal disease in college students and up to 88 percent of deaths. The vaccine is considered safe and is well tolerated with the most common side effect being soreness at the injection site. It provides protection against meningococcal disease for three to five years. The Haemophilus influenza type b (Hib) vaccine given to infants and young children is often referred to as a "meningitis vaccine." The Hib vaccine does not protect against meningococcal disease and does not meet the vaccination requirement.

Additional information can be obtained on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Website at www.cdc.gov/health/diseases.htm (select meningococcal disease) or the American College Health Association Website at www.acha.org.

Student Name (Please Print) _____

LAST **FIRST** **MI**

CNU ID _____ **Date of Birth** _____

If other than the student, name and relationship of person completing form:

Name _____

(Please mark the appropriate box)

☐ Parent ☐ Legal Representative

I have read the information on meningococcal disease and:

(Mark the appropriate box)

☐ DO NOT wish to receive the meningococcal vaccine.

☐ Received the meningococcal vaccine on _____ .

Date of Vaccination

Signature (Required) _____

Student, or if under 18, parent or legal representative Date

*****MENINGITIS HEALTH FACTS ON REVERSE*****

Christopher Newport University
Health & Wellness Services

HEALTH FACTS UPDATE: MENINGITIS

The greatest protection against meningicoccal disease, meningitis, is in knowing how the disease is spread, as well as living a safe and healthy lifestyle that supports a strong immune system.

What is meningitis?
Meningitis is an infection that causes inflammation of the membranes surrounding the brain and spinal cord. Sometimes people refer to it as spinal meningitis. Meningitis can be caused by a viral or bacterial infection. Viral meningitis is generally less severe and resolves without specific treatment, while bacterial meningitis can be quite severe. Streptococcus pneumonia and Neisseria meningitis (also called meningococcal meningitis) are the leading causes of bacterial meningitis today.

Are there different types of meningitis?
Yes, there are eight types that cause this disease in the world, types A, B, C, X, Y, Z, W-135 and L. Types B and C cause almost all disease in the U.S. (about half and half), with B being the more severe of the two. Disease with C is rarely fatal, as opposed to B, which can be quite severe.

Are there vaccines against meningitis?
Yes, there is a vaccine that is 80-100 percent effective against A and C serogroups, and 65 percent against Y and W-135 in older children and adults. This percentage drops down after three years to 60-65 percent for all serogroups.

What are the side effects of the vaccine? How safe is it?
The vaccine has an excellent safety profile. Side effects are mild and infrequent, consisting primarily of redness and swelling at the site of injection lasting up to two days. It should be deferred during any acute illness. The vaccine should not be administered to pregnant women or individuals sensitive to thimerosol or any other components of the vaccine.

Where can the vaccine be obtained?
Contact your local health department, or talk to your family physician.

What strains have been diagnosed in college settings?
According to the recent CDC studies, types A, B, C, Y and W-135 were determined to be the serogroups found on college campuses. C has been found to be responsible for the highest number of cases, as well as type B and Y.

What are the signs and symptoms?
Symptoms include fever, severe headache, stiff neck and rash. These symptoms can develop over several hours, or they may take one to two days. Other symptoms may include nausea, vomiting, discomfort looking into bright lights, confusion and sleepiness.

Is meningitis contagious?
Yes, some forms are contagious.

How is meningococcal disease spread?
Meningococcal disease is transmitted through the air via droplets of respiratory secretions and direct contact with an infected person. Direct contact, for these purposes, is defined as oral contact with shared items such as cigarettes or drinking glasses, musical instrument mouth pieces, or through intimate contact such as kissing. Fortunately, none of the bacteria that cause meningitis are as contagious as things like the common cold or the flu, and they are not spread by casual contact or by simply breathing the air where a person with meningitis has been. The incubation period is generally three to four days, to a maximum of 10 days.

Who is at risk for contracting the disease?
Meningococcal disease can affect people at any age. Recent studies found students residing on campuses in dormitories have a higher risk for meningococcal disease than college students overall. This is due, in part, to the "familiarity" of close living contact, as well as the behaviors of students, particularly freshmen, that compromise their immune system. Sleep deprivation, poor nutrition and lack of exercise, smoking and drinking excessive amounts of alcohol all contribute to suppressing the immune system.

How is meningitis diagnosed?
Early diagnosis and treatment are very important. If symptoms occur, see a doctor immediately. The diagnosis is usually made by growing bacteria from a sample of spinal fluid.

Can meningitis be treated?
Appropriate antibiotic treatment of most common types of bacterial meningitis should reduce the risk of death from meningitis to below 15 percent, although the risk is higher among the elderly.

What is meningococcemia?
Sometimes the meningococcal bacteria can infect the bloodstream. This is also referred to as septicemia or blood poisoning. This infection is termed meningooccemia. It can lead to kidney and heart failure, and like meningococcal meningitis, can result in severe disability and death. (It is this severe form that was the focus of recent TV programs.)

What else can college students do to reduce the risk of contracting meningococcal disease?
Maximize your body's own immune response. Eat a balanced diet, and get adequate sleep and exercise. Avoid cigarettes and excessive use of alcohol (both compromise your immune system), and do not make a habit of sharing drinks and cigarettes. Use your own mouthpieces for musical instruments. WASH YOUR HANDS!

For further questions or to receive more information, please contact University Health & Wellness Services at (757) 594-7661.