



With meningococcal disease most recently confirmed at UW-Madison and cited in state news sources, **Health & Wellness Services** wanted to take a moment and inform parents and students about bacterial meningitis; what causes the illness, how it is spread and how to prevent it.

Meningococcal disease is a serious illness caused by a type of bacteria called *Neisseria meningitidis*. It can lead to meningitis (infection of the lining of the brain and spinal cord) and bacteremia or septicemia (infections of the blood). There are at least 12 types of *Neisseria meningitidis*, called “serogroups.” Serogroups A, B, C, W, and Y cause most meningococcal disease.

Meningococcal disease often strikes without warning most often in adolescents and young adults— typically people who are otherwise healthy. Symptoms of meningococcal disease are usually sudden onset of fever, headache, and stiff neck. It can start with symptoms similar to influenza (flu), and will often also cause nausea, vomiting, increased sensitivity to light, rash, and confusion. After exposure, people typically become symptomatic 2-10 days (most commonly 3-4 days).

Meningococcal disease can spread from person to person through contact with respiratory secretions (coughing, kissing, sharing drinks or sharing eating utensils) or lengthy close contact, especially among people living in the same household.

## Vaccines to Prevent Bacterial Meningitis

### 1. Meningitis B

**Meningococcal (MenB) vaccine** can help prevent meningococcal disease caused by serogroup B. Meningococcal B vaccine is **recommended for high risk people age 16-23**.

**MenB is approved and may be administered** for all young adults age 16-23.

*High risk groups are:*

People at risk because of a serogroup B meningococcal disease outbreak

Anyone whose spleen is damaged or has been removed

Anyone with a rare immune system condition called “persistent complement component deficiency”

Anyone taking a drug called eculizumab (also called Soliris®)

Microbiologists who routinely work with *meningitidis* isolates



## 2. Meningitis A, C, W, & Y

**Meningococcal conjugate vaccine**, MCV4, is recommended to help protect against serogroups A, C, W, Y

St. Norbert Health and Wellness, along with the CDC, recommends **all incoming students, ages 16-23, be immunized** with the **Meningococcal conjugate vaccine, MCV4**. Any student who had their first MCV4 vaccine **before age 16 should have a booster dose before entering college**.

### Vaccinations at Health and Wellness Services

**St. Norbert College Health and Wellness Services will carry both vaccines in limited supply. Vaccines have been ordered. For future appointments call 920.403.3266.**

Please check with your specific insurance plan for vaccine coverage. If you don't have insurance that covers vaccines, contact your local health department.

### Additional resources

For more information on **meningitis and vaccination**:

- [Meningitis \(CDC\)](#)
- [Meningococcal Disease \(CDC\)](#)
- Health Provider
- Local Health Department