

Meningitis Vaccine



Meningitis is an inflammation of the linings of the brain and spinal cord caused by either viruses or bacteria. Viral meningitis is more common than bacterial meningitis and usually occurs in late spring and summer. Signs and symptoms of viral meningitis may include stiff neck, headache, nausea, vomiting and rash. Most cases of viral meningitis run a short, uneventful course. Since the causative agent is a virus, antibiotics are not effective. Persons who have had contact with an individual with viral meningitis do not require any treatment. Bacterial meningitis occurs rarely and sporadically throughout the year, although outbreaks tend to occur in late winter and early spring. Because this type of meningitis can cause grave illness and rapidly progress to death, it requires early diagnosis and treatment. Approximately 3,000 cases of bacterial meningitis occur each year in the U.S. Preliminary data from a surveillance study of U.S. college students indicates that for college freshmen the rate is 1.4 cases per 100,000. **For college freshmen living in dormitories the rate is 3.8 cases per 100,000. There is no public health recommendation for universal immunization at this time. However, the Center for Disease Control recommends that information about meningococcal meningitis and the potential benefits of vaccination be provided to college students, and that the vaccine be made available to college freshmen or other undergraduates.** UCSB Student Health recommends the meningitis vaccination for freshmen. Some health insurance plans cover or subsidize the cost of the vaccine. If it is covered, there is often a requirement that it be given at your local primary care provider's office, so call your local doctor or health plan to check. More information about meningitis and the vaccine can be found at www.sa.ucsb.edu/edu/studenthealth/