

# Important Information Regarding Bacterial Meningitis

The following information is provided to all incoming college students who attend Texas state schools. Bacterial Meningitis is a serious, potentially deadly disease that can progress quickly. Meningitis causes inflammation of the membranes that surround the brain and spinal cord and can also infect the blood. Each year approximately 3,000 Americans contract this disease. Of these, 100-125 cases occur on college campuses with anywhere from 5-15 resulting in death. While there is a treatment for this disease, those who survive may develop severe health problems or disabilities. To avoid this risk, every precaution should be observed.

## **What are the symptoms?**

- High Fever
- Lethargy
- Nausea
- Severe headache
- Seizures
- Vomiting
- Stiff neck
- Rash or purple patches on skin
- Light sensitivity
- Confusion and sleepiness

There may be a rash of tiny, red-purple spots caused by bleeding under the skin. These can occur anywhere on the body. Additional symptoms can be indicative of higher risk. If these symptoms appear seek immediate medical attention.

## **How is bacterial meningitis diagnosed?**

Diagnosis is made by a medical provider and is usually based on a combination of clinical symptoms and laboratory results from spinal fluid and blood tests.

Early diagnosis and treatment can greatly improve the likelihood of recovery.

How is the disease transmitted?

The disease is transmitted when people exchange saliva (such as by kissing, or by sharing drinking containers, utensils, cigarettes, toothbrushes, etc.) or come in contact with respiratory or throat secretions.

How do you increase the risk of contracting bacterial meningitis?

People increase their risk of getting bacterial meningitis by through exposure to saliva of others by sharing cigarettes, water bottles, eating utensils, food, kissing, etc. or by living in close conditions to others who have bacterial meningitis (such as sharing a room/suite in a residence hall or group home).

## **What are the possible consequences of the disease?**

- Death (in 8 to 24 hours from perfectly well to dead)
- Limb damage (fingers, toes, arms, legs) that requires amputation
- Kidney failure
- Convulsions
- Coma
- Permanent brain damage
- Hearing loss, blindness
- Learning disability
- Gangrene

## **Can the disease be treated?**

Antibiotic treatment, if received early, can save lives and chances of recovery are increased. However, permanent disability or death can still occur.

Vaccinations are available and should be considered for:

- Those sharing a room/suite in a residence hall
- college students 25 years old or younger

Vaccinations are effective against 4 of the 5 most common bacterial types that cause 70% of the disease in the U.S. (but does not protect against all types of meningitis).

Vaccinations take 7-10 days to become effective, with protection lasting 3-5 years.

Vaccination is very safe – most common side effects are redness and minor pain at injection site for up to two days.

Vaccination is available through

Vaccination Unit 450-6790 or 450-6791

The Vaccination Unit is free for most screenings/vaccinations but you must present a Qatar ID.

Travel Clinic 447-3597

Al Ahli Hospital 489-8888

Doha Clinic 438-4333

Qatar Medical Center 444-0606

How can I find out more information?

Contact your own health care provider.

Call the Qatar CDC Office at 447-3131 or 447-3531.

Visit the following websites:

[www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dbmd/diseaseinfo](http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dbmd/diseaseinfo)

[www.acha.org](http://www.acha.org)

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