



**PRESS RELEASE FOR LOCAL MEDIA**

Central Michigan District Health Department  
“Promoting Healthy Families, Healthy Communities”

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**To: Local Newspapers**

**From: Amenzee Omofonmwan, Health Promotion & Preparedness Intern**

**RE: Meningococcal Vaccination for College Students**

**Release Date: August 2009**

College, like most educational institutions, allows students to come in contact with one another on a daily basis. This may be during class, community events, or social gatherings. Students that live in college dormitories have an increased chance of regular contact with their peers. They also have an increased risk of acquiring meningococcal disease.

**What is Meningococcal Disease?**

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Meningococcal Disease is a serious illness that is caused by *Neisseria meningitides* bacteria. It can cause meningitis which is an infection of the fluid surrounding the brain and spinal cord. It can also cause blood infections. It is estimated that about 2,600 people are diagnosed with meningococcal disease each year and about 10-15 percent of those people die. About 10 percent of those that do recover, experience serious long-term effects such as hearing loss, loss of mental capacity, loss of fingers or toes, seizures and other nervous system problems.

**How does Meningococcal Disease spread?**

Meningococcal disease is spread by the close or direct contact with secretions from the nose and throat. Such examples include: kissing, sharing silverware, drinking directly from the same container, sharing a cigarette or lipstick, and coughing.

### **What are the symptoms of Meningitis?**

Symptoms of Meningococcal Meningitis can include a high fever, headache, a very stiff neck, confusion, nausea, sensitivity to light, vomiting, and exhaustion. Students can become seriously ill very quickly so they should seek medical attention immediately if they have two or more of these symptoms.

### **What should I know about The Meningococcal Vaccine?**

The vaccine is highly effective (between 85-100 percent), at preventing four of the major strains of bacteria that cause Meningococcal Meningitis on college campuses. For most college students, only one dose of the vaccine is needed. The vaccine actively protects for about three to five years. Immunity develops within seven to ten days after vaccination. A vaccine, like any other medicine, is capable of causing serious problems, such as severe allergic reaction; however, that risk is very small. Other ways to protect yourself from the disease are to wash your hands often and avoid sharing such things as forks, spoons, drinking containers, lipstick, and smoking materials.

To learn more about Meningococcal Disease and the vaccine to prevent it, contact your student health services on campus, your medical provider, or your local health department branch office. Further information can be found at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's website, [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov) or Central Michigan District Health Department's website, [www.cmdhd.org](http://www.cmdhd.org).

This article has been brought to you by the Central Michigan District Health Department which serves the residents of Arenac, Clare, Gladwin, Isabella, Osceola, and Roscommon Counties.

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Source: Centers for Disease Control website ([www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov))