CAL MARITIME

Student ID#: _____

AB 1452 Information about Meningococcal Disease and Immunization

What is meningitis?
Meningitis is an infection of the fluid of a person's spinal cord and the fluid that surrounds the brain. Meningitis is usually caused by a viral or bacterial infection. Knowing whether meningitis is caused by a virus or bacterium is important because the severity of illness and the treatment differ. Viral meningitis is generally less severe and resolves without specific treatment, while bacterial meningitis can be quite severe and may result in brain damage, hearing loss, learning disability or death. For bacterial meningitis, it is also important to know which type of bacteria is causing the meningitis because antibiotics can prevent some types from spreading and infecting other people. Today, Streptococcus pneumoniae and Neisseria meningitis are the leading causes of bacterial meningitis.

What of the signs and symptoms of meningitis?
High fever, headache, and stiff neck are common symptoms of meningitis. These symptoms can develop over several hours, or they may take 1 to 2 days. Other symptoms may include nausea, vomiting, discomfort looking into bright lights, rash, flu like symptoms, confusion, and sleepiness. As the disease progresses, patients of any age may have seizures.

How is meningitis diagnosed?
Early diagnosis and treatment are very important. If symptoms occur, the patient should see a doctor immediately. The diagnosis is usually made by growing bacteria from a sample of spinal fluid. The spinal fluid is obtained by performing a spinal tap, in which a needle is inserted into an area in the lower back, where fluid in the spinal canal is readily accessible. Identification of the type of bacteria responsible is important for selection of correct antibiotics.

Can meningitis be treated?
Bacterial meningitis can be treated with a number of effective antibiotics. It is important, however, that treatment be started early in the course of the disease. Appropriate antibiotic treatment of most common types of bacterial meningitis should reduce the risk of dying from meningitis to below 15%, although the risk is higher among the elderly.

Is meningitis contagious?
Yes, some forms of bacterial meningitis are contagious. The bacteria are spread through the exchange of respiratory and throat secretions (i.e., coughing, kissing, using someone's glass). 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. However, sometimes the bacteria that cause meningitis have spread to other people who have had close or prolonged contact with a patient with meningitis caused by Neisseria meningitis. People in the same household or anyone with direct contact secretions (such as a boyfriend or girlfriend) would be considered at increased risk of acquiring the infection. People who qualify as close contacts of a person with meningitis caused by Neisseria meningitis should receive antibiotics to prevent them from getting the disease.

Who Is at Risk for Meningitis?
Meningitis can strike at any age; however, certain groups have a greater risk for contracting the disease:

- College students, particularly freshmen, who live in campus residence halls.
- Anyone in close contact with a known case.
- Anyone with an upper respiratory infection with a compromised immune system.
- Anyone traveling to areas of the world where meningitis is endemic (prevalent in the region).

Is There a Vaccine to Help Prevent Meningitis?

- A safe, effective vaccine is available.
- The vaccine is 85% to 100% effective in preventing four kinds of bacterial infections (serogroups A,C, Y, W-135) that cause about 70% of disease in the U.S.
- The vaccine is safe, with mild side effects, such as redness and pain at the injection site lasting up to 2 days.
- After vaccination, immunity develops within 7 to 10 days and remains effective for a minimum of 3 to 5 years. As with any vaccine, vaccination against meningitis may not protect 100% of all susceptible individuals.

Is Vaccination Recommended for College Students?

- Certain college students, particularly freshmen who live or plan to live in residence halls, have a 6-fold increased risk of disease.
- The American College Health Association has adopted the recommendation of the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), which states that college students, particularly freshmen, living in residence halls, be vaccinated against meningococcal meningitis.
- Other undergraduate students wishing to reduce their risk of meningitis can also choose to be vaccinated.

In accordance with Assembly Bill 1452, Chapter 1.7, Section 120395 please acknowledge receipt of this information by completing the box below and returning with your Cal Maritime Health Admission Forms.

The Neisseria meningitis vaccine is available at the Cal Maritime Student Health Center for a fee of $110.00

I have already received this vaccination

- ❑ **Yes**
- ❑ **No**

I would like to receive this vaccine

- ❑ **Yes (if yes, where do you plan on receiving this vaccine? _____)**
- ❑ **No**

_____	_____	_____
Name of Applicant (Printed)	**Signature of Applicant**	**Date**

If you have any questions, contact Cal Maritime Student Health Center at (707) 654-1170