

American University Student Health Center

Information about Meningococcal Disease and Vaccination and Waiver for Students who reside in University Housing

District of Columbia municipal regulations mandate each first-year student enrolled in a school of post secondary education in the District of Columbia and living, or who may live, in on-campus student housing to receive one (1) dose of meningococcal vaccine.

The regulation provides an **exemption** for students signing a waiver that reviews the dangers of meningococcal disease and indicates that the vaccination has been declined. To qualify for this **exemption** you are required to review the information below and sign the waiver at the end of this document. Please note if a student is under 18 years of age, a parent or legal guardian must be given a copy of this document and must sign the waiver.

Meningococcal Disease Facts

- Meningococcal disease is a serious infection caused by bacteria, most commonly causing meningitis (an infection of the membranes that surround the spinal cord and brain) or sepsis (an infection of blood that affects many organ systems).
- College freshmen, particularly those living in residence halls, have a modestly increased risk of getting the disease compared with other persons the same age. Up to 100 cases occur among the 15 million college students in the United States each year, with 5-15 deaths. However, the overall risk of disease, even among college students, is low.
- Crowded living conditions and smoking (active or passive) are additional risk factors that are potentially modifiable.
- Bacteria are spread from person-to-person through secretions from the mouth and nose, transmitted through close contact. Casual contact or breathing in the same air space is not considered sufficient for transmission.
- Common symptoms include: stiff neck, headache, fever, sensitivity to light, sleepiness, confusion, and seizures.
- The disease can be treated with antibiotics, but treatment must be started early. Even with treatment, some patients may die. Survivors may be left with a severe disability such as the loss of a limb.
- There is a vaccine available that can protect you from 4 of the 5 most common types of meningococcal bacteria. The vaccine lasts for 3-5 years. Vaccination may decrease the risk of meningococcal disease; however it does not eliminate the risk because the vaccine does not prevent against all types of meningococcal bacteria. Approximately 50-70% of disease among college students is likely to be vaccine-preventable.
- The vaccine is available through private providers, travel clinics, health departments, and the Student Health Center at American University.

Students may begin classes without a certificate of immunization against meningococcal disease if: 1) the student has a letter from a physician stating that there is a medical reason why he/she can't receive the vaccine; 2) the student (or the student's parent or legal guardian, if the student is a minor) presents a statement in writing that such vaccination is against his/her sincere religious belief; or 3) the student (or the student's parent or legal guardian, if the student is a minor) signs the waiver below stating that the student has received information about the dangers of meningococcal disease, reviewed the information provided and: a) elected to decline the vaccine; or b) could not obtain meningococcal vaccine due to a shortage, but wishes to receive vaccine (as indicated below).

Waiver for Meningococcal Vaccination Requirement

By signing below, I state that:

1. I am either eighteen (18) years of age or older and applying for this waiver on my own behalf; or I am the parent or legal guardian of the student identified below and applying for this waiver on his/her behalf.
2. I have received and reviewed the information provided by American University on the risks of contracting meningococcal disease and the availability and effectiveness of meningococcal vaccine.
3. I understand that District of Columbia law requires newly enrolled students at colleges and universities who are living in residence halls to receive meningococcal vaccinations, unless the students provide a signed waiver of the vaccination or otherwise qualify for one of the exemptions specified in the law.
4. After reviewing the materials identified above, I have voluntarily decided to refuse the meningococcal vaccine on my own behalf or on the behalf of the student identified below if his/her is less than eighteen (18) years of age.
5. I understand that if I reconsider my decision, I may return to the Student Health Center to receive the vaccine.
6. I hereby release American University, its employees from all responsible for any consequences of my decision.

Student Name: _____ Date of Birth: _____

Student ID: _____

Student Signature: _____ Date: _____

If Student is under the age of eighteen (18), signature of parent or legal guardian:

Parent or Legal Guardian's Signature

Date

Print Name