

Bacterial Meningitis

Important information for McMurry University students

Seek medical attention immediately if symptoms of meningococcal disease appear. Meningitis and bloodstream infections are serious and can become life-threatening within hours.

What is bacterial meningitis?

Bacterial meningitis is an inflammation of the membranes that surround the brain and spinal cord. Meningococcal disease can also cause bloodstream infections. Both conditions are serious and require prompt medical evaluation.

Symptoms to watch for

• Fever	• Severe headache
• Stiff neck	• Nausea or vomiting
• Sensitivity to light	• Confusion, sleepiness, or altered mental status
• Rash or purple spots on the skin	• Seizures
• Cold hands and feet	• Severe muscle, joint, chest, or abdominal pain

Important: The more symptoms that are present, the higher the concern. Do not wait to seek care if symptoms are severe or rapidly worsening.

How does it spread?

People can spread meningococcal bacteria by sharing respiratory and throat secretions, such as saliva or spit. Close or lengthy contact is usually needed.

- Kissing or close contact
- Sharing drinks, water bottles, eating utensils, toothbrushes, cigarettes, or vaping devices

What increases risk?

- Living in close quarters, including residence halls, suites, or group housing
- Close or lengthy contact with someone who has meningococcal disease
- Some medical conditions or medicines that affect the immune system

Diagnosis, treatment, and prevention

Use this page to understand next steps, prevention, and where to find more information.

Call 911 or go to the nearest emergency room for life-threatening symptoms, severe illness, trouble breathing, severe pain, confusion, seizure, or a rapidly worsening condition.

How is it diagnosed?

Diagnosis is made by a medical provider. Providers may use symptoms along with lab testing of blood or cerebrospinal fluid.

Because early symptoms can look like other illnesses, prompt evaluation is important when meningococcal disease is suspected.

Can it be treated?

Healthcare providers treat meningococcal disease with antibiotics. Treatment is started right away when the disease is suspected.

Early diagnosis and treatment can improve the chance of recovery, but serious disability or death can still occur.

Possible consequences

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| • Death can occur, even with treatment | • Brain damage or other nervous system problems |
| • Hearing loss or blindness | • Reduced kidney function or kidney failure |
| • Loss of limbs or tissue damage requiring surgery | • Coma, convulsions, or other serious complications |

Prevention and vaccination

Vaccination is the best protection against meningococcal disease, although vaccines cannot prevent every case.

- Talk with a healthcare provider or vaccine provider about which meningococcal vaccine is appropriate for you.
- Vaccines are commonly available through healthcare providers, local health departments, and many pharmacies.
- Meningococcal vaccines may cause mild side effects, such as soreness or redness where the shot was given.

McMurry contact

Student Health Center

Phone: [325-793-4857](tel:325-793-4857)

Contact Health Services with questions about campus health requirements or where to submit documentation.

Learn more

[CDC Meningococcal Disease](#)

[CDC Meningococcal Vaccination](#)

[American College Health Association](#)

This handout provides general health information and does not replace medical evaluation or treatment. If you are concerned about symptoms, contact a healthcare provider right away.