

MENINGITIS: FAST FACTS AND FAQ'S

Last revision March 9, 2018

Meningitis and Meningitis B: Fast Facts about the disease and vaccines

FAST FACTS ON THE FLY:

- Most college students are not protected against Meningitis B.
- We advise undergraduates to receive both MENINGITIS ACWY and MENINGITIS B vaccines.
- Students can check their immunization record on our patient portal.
- YES. Smith Insurance covers the vaccine.
- YES. Private insurance usually covers the vaccine (you may need to submit paperwork).
- YES. We have vaccine. We will provide vaccine by appointment and by special clinic.
- Students can get vaccine at CVS in Northampton or Amherst. Bring your insurance card.
- Students should fax us proof of vaccination to 413-585-4639.
- SEE [OUR WEBSITE](#) FOR DETAILED INFORMATION ABOUT MENINGITIS, STAYING HEALTHY, INSURANCE COVERAGE, AND AUTHORIZATION. Go to <https://www.smith.edu/health/>

What is Meningitis?

Meningitis is an inflammation (swelling) of the meninges, the protective membranes of the brain and spinal column. It can be caused by many factors. Bacterial Meningitis is uncommon but requires immediate medical intervention. It causes severe, rapid illness, and can be deadly. Five (5) of the most common forms of meningitis can be prevented with vaccines.

But I already received a Meningitis vaccine. Why do I have to get more?

The standard required “quadrivalent” vaccine for meningitis only cover 4 strains of infection—A,C,W,Y, brand names Menactra and Menveo. However, ***the kind of meningitis we are seeing in the five college community and other colleges across the country is type B—this type of meningitis is ONLY covered by Meningitis B vaccine***, brand names Bexsero or Trumenba. ***Therefore, we encourage all students to get both types of vaccines to protect against all strains of this infection. All students are encouraged to get both Meningitis ACWY and Meningitis B vaccines.***

Trumenba and Bexsero are different from the vaccines I had when I came to Smith?

YES--The required meningitis vaccine for incoming students covers 4 strains of meningitis (A,C,W, Y) but not meningitis B. Only Trumenba and Bexsero cover the meningitis B strain. This is the type of infection we are seeing right now in colleges across the country. That is why we are encouraging all students to get protected against all strains of meningitis by getting BOTH Meningitis ACWY and B vaccines.

What are symptoms of Meningitis?

[SIGNS OF MENINGITIS](#) can be distinguished from other illnesses by their rapid development and severity. Symptoms occur suddenly and worsen dramatically over hours or days. Symptoms are caused by the swelling that occurs in the meninges, and include a combination of sudden and extreme symptoms that interfere with normal functioning, such as severe headache, extreme sensitivity to light, high fever, rigid stiffness in the neck so that the head cannot be turned or bent toward the chest, and confusion, mood changes, and delirium. Nausea and vomiting may occur. We encourage students to contact us with any symptoms right away. Symptoms tend to

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occur within 3-7 days of exposure. Bacterial Meningitis tends to affect younger people—persons over their mid-20's are not considered high risk.

How is it spread? How do I protect myself from getting meningitis?

Meningitis is NOT easily contagious like the cold or flu. It is spread by direct contact with the saliva of an infected person. It is spread through close or intimate contact through infected saliva. **Therefore, it is important to AVOID:**

- Kissing and other intimate contact

- Sharing drinks, food, eating utensils, water bottles

- Sharing lip balm or other makeup

- Sharing smoking materials

- Sharing mouthpieces, such as those found on musical instruments, pipes, vapes, and other smoking devices.

Wash your hands frequently—it's the number one way to prevent illness!

Avoid touching your face; and cover your coughs and sneezes. Disinfect commonly touched and shared items like doorknobs, keyboards, phones, counters, and workspaces. Anytime germs get on our hands, they get transferred to whatever we touch, and touching our faces is an especially efficient way for germs to get into our systems and cause infection.

By practicing HEALTH SMART behaviors, like getting plenty of rest, eating nutritious meals, staying hydrated, and avoiding close contact with others who are sick, we can further prevent illness.

I understand there are 2 vaccines for Meningitis B. What is the difference between Trumenba and Bexsero?

Both are FDA approved for protection against meningitis B. People with Latex allergy cannot receive Bexsero. In those individuals, Trumenba is preferred. Bexsero provides complete protection with a 2 shot series given over 1 month. For routine immunization purposes, Trumenba is provided in a 2 dose series. However, In the event of an official 'outbreak' as declared by public health officials, the Centers for Disease Control and/or the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, a 3rd dose of Trumenba is needed, with the 3rd dose given 6 months after the 1st.

Will I have more complete protection with 3 doses of Trumenba?

Two doses of Trumenba is the standard recommendation for the prevention of meningitis B. But 3 doses of Trumenba provides additional protection. Which is why, if an outbreak of meningitis B is declared, 3 doses are needed (time 0, 1 to 2 months and 6 months). By comparison, complete protection is provided by 2 doses of Bexsero (time 0, 1 month).

I received a first dose of Trumenba, can I have Bexsero for my second dose?

While the vaccines are both effective, they are not interchangeable. If you started with one, subsequent doses must be the same vaccine.

MENINGITIS: FAST FACTS AND FAQ's

Last revision March 9, 2018

If I am late for my next dose of can I get it later; will I still have protection?

Yes, if you are late with a scheduled dose, you may take it at a later date.

Can I get my 3rd dose earlier than 6 months?

No. Vaccines must be given at minimum intervals to be effective. This means you can get a dose late, but not early.

Will insurance pay for my vaccine?

Smith Insurance covers the vaccine. Private insurers usually cover the vaccine—but may require authorization or additional information in order to do so. Call your insurance provider about coverage and cost. Inform them that you are a student at Smith College in the Five College area where state officials have identified a Meningitis B outbreak. Ask they check your pharmacy benefit regarding coverage with or without a written prescription. They may ask for CPT and diagnosis codes. The CPT code to be billed for Bexsero Meningitis B vaccine is 90620. The CPT code for Trumenba Meningitis B vaccine is 90621. The diagnosis code is Z20.811 (contact with and (suspected) exposure to meningococcus), due to outbreak status declared by state health and federal health authorities. Further information about insurance and authorization can be found on our website.

I'm a Graduate student. Shouldn't I get the vaccine? Shouldn't I get treatment?

-Meningitis vaccine is NOT indicated for persons over the age of 25 except in rare instances. Because this form of meningitis is contracted through direct contact with an infected person's saliva, only intimate partners and other close contacts, or those who may have shared drinks, food, instruments, or smoking materials are considered at risk. Casual contact in classrooms, athletic facilities, and in the community is not considered high risk activity.

I am an ADA. Shouldn't I get the vaccine? Shouldn't I get treatment?

-Meningitis vaccine is NOT indicated for persons over the age of 25 except in rare instances. Because this form of meningitis is contracted through direct contact with an infected person's saliva, only intimate partners and other close contacts, or those who may have shared drinks, food, instruments, or smoking materials are considered at risk. Casual contact in classrooms, athletic facilities, and in the community is not considered high risk activity.

I work on campus. Shouldn't I get the vaccine? Shouldn't I get treatment?

-Meningitis vaccine is NOT indicated for persons over the age of 25 except in rare instances. Staff and Faculty may seek the advice of their primary care providers regarding vaccination and treatment. Because this form of meningitis is contracted through direct contact with an infected person's saliva, only intimate partners and other close contacts, or those who may have shared drinks, food, instruments, or smoking materials are considered at risk. Casual contact in classrooms, athletic facilities, and in the community is not considered high risk activity.

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