



BARTON COMMUNITY COLLEGE Meningitis Health Information Facts



Students residing in Barton Community College campus housing are required (per the Kansas Board of Regents) to receive the meningitis vaccination or sign a waiver declining vaccination. Vaccination may be obtained at a later date.

A waiver declining the immunization may be signed after reviewing information on meningococcal disease. If the student is under the age of 18 the document must be signed by a parent or legal guardian.

Written documentation of immunization or waiver must be provided.

What is meningococcal meningitis?

Meningococcal meningitis is a severe bacterial infection of the bloodstream and meninges (a thin lining covering the brain and spinal cord). It is a relatively rare disease and usually occurs as a single isolated event.

How is the germ that causes this type of meningitis spread?

The meningococcus germ is spread by direct close contact (kissing, sneezing, coughing, sharing water bottles) with the nose or throat discharges of an infected person. Many people may carry this particular germ in their nose and throat without any signs of illness.

Who gets meningococcal meningitis?

Anyone can get meningococcal meningitis, but it is more common in infants, children, and young adults. College freshmen who live in student housing have a slightly higher risk of getting this infection than others their age.

What are the symptoms?

Most individuals exposed to the meningococcus germ do not become seriously ill, some may develop a fever, headache, vomiting, stiff neck and rash. One –fourth of those who recover may have permanent damage to the nervous system. The disease occasionally causes death.

How soon do the symptoms appear?

After exposure, the symptoms will appear within two to ten days, but generally within five days.

When and for how long is an infected person able to spread the disease?

From the time a person is first infected until the germ is no longer present in nose and throat discharge the disease may be transmitted. The duration varies according to individuals and treatment course followed.

What is the treatment for meningococcal meningitis?

Penicillin is the drug of choice for treatment, although other antibiotics are very effective in eliminating the germ from the nose and mouth.

Should people who have been in contact with a diagnosed case of meningococcal meningitis be treated?

Only people who have been in close contact (household members, intimate contacts, etc) need to be considered for preventive treatment. Casual contact as might occur in a regular classroom or office setting is not usually significant enough to cause concern. People who think they have been exposed to meningococcal infection should contact the local health department to discuss whether treatment is advised.

Is there a vaccine to prevent meningococcal meningitis?

Presently, there are two vaccines that will protect against several of the strains of the meningococcal germ.

Is the meningococcal vaccine safe?

Vaccines, like any medicine, are capable of causing problems such as allergic reactions. The risks associated with receiving the vaccine are much less significant than the risks that are associated with the disease. Some individuals may experience mild side effects which include redness or pain at vaccine site, warm to touch, and mild fever.

Where can a student get vaccinated?

Local healthcare provider, and local Health departments.

Where can more information be obtained?

- Healthcare provider
- Local Health departments
- Student Health Office: brockk@bartonccc.edu phone: 620-792-9233
- The Center for Disease Control (CDC): http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dbmd/diseaseinfo/meningococcal_g.htm
- Kansas Department of Health and Environment: <http://www.kdheks.gov/pdf/hef/ab1037.pdf>

