



BACTERIAL MENINGITIS VACCINATIONS ARE REQUIRED FOR ALL ENTERING STUDENTS UNDER THE AGE OF 22

The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board adopted amendments to Texas Education Code, Chapter 54, Subchapter A, §54.0065 on an emergency basis that requires entering students¹ at institutions of higher education to have an initial bacterial meningitis vaccination or booster dose during the five-year period preceding or at least 10 days prior to the first day of the first semester in which the student initially enrolls at an institution.

Evidence of the student having received the vaccination from an appropriate health practitioner² must be received by the Admissions Office. Acceptable evidence of vaccination or receiving a booster dose includes:

- The signature or stamp of a physician or his/her designee, or public health personnel on a form which shows the month, day, and year the vaccination dose or booster was administered
- An official immunization record generated from a state or local health authority.
- An Official record received from school officials, including a record from another state.

This information shall be maintained in accordance with Family Education Rights and Privacy Act Regulations, and with Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act.

Exceptions

A student is not required to submit evidence of receiving the vaccination against bacterial meningitis or evidence of receiving a booster dose if the student is 22 years of age. A student, or parent or guardian of a student, is not required to submit evidence of receiving the vaccination against bacterial meningitis if the student, or a parent or guardian of a student, submits to the institution:

- An affidavit or a certificate signed by a physician who is duly registered and licensed to practice medicine in the United States, in which it is stated that, in the physician's opinion, the vaccination required would be injurious to the health and well-being of the student; OR
- An affidavit signed by the student stating that the student declines the vaccination for bacterial meningitis for reasons of conscience, including a religious belief. A conscientious exemption form from the Texas Department of State Health Services must be used. For information about obtaining this form, call 1-800-252-9152 or go to www.dshs.state.tx.us/immunize.

Contact your health care provider for information on receiving the vaccination.

¹ Entering student—A first-time student of an institution of higher education including a student who transfers to the institution from another institution; or a student who previously attended an institution of higher education before January 1, 2012, and who is enrolling in the same or another institution of higher education following a break in enrollment of at least one fall or spring semester.

² Health practitioner—Any person authorized by law to administer a vaccination.

Important Information Concerning BACTERIAL MENINGITIS

This information is being provided to all new college students in the state of Texas. Bacterial Meningitis is a serious, potentially deadly disease that can progress extremely fast, *so take the utmost caution*. It is an inflammation of the membranes that surround the brain and spinal cord. The bacteria that cause meningitis can also infect the blood. This disease strikes about 3,000 Americans each year, including 100-125 on college campuses, leading to 5-15 deaths among college students every year. There is a treatment, but those who survive may develop severe health problems or disabilities.

What are the Symptoms?

- High fever
- Severe headache
- Stiff Neck
- Lethargy
- Light Sensitivity
- Vomiting
- Nausea
- Seizures
- Confusion and sleepiness
- There may be a rash of tiny red-purple spots caused by bleeding under the skin. These can occur anywhere on the body.
- The more symptoms, the higher the risk! So, when these symptoms appear, seek immediate medical attention.

How Is Bacterial Meningitis Diagnosed?

- Diagnosis is made by a medical provider and is usually based on a combination of clinical symptoms and laboratory results from spinal fluid and blood tests.
- Early diagnosis and treatment can greatly improve the likelihood of recovery.

How is the Disease Transmitted?

- The disease is transmitted when people exchange saliva (such as kissing, or by sharing drinking containers, utensils, cigarettes, toothbrushes, etc.) or come in contact with respiratory or throat secretions.

How do You Increase Your Risk of Getting Bacterial Meningitis?

- Exposure to saliva by sharing cigarettes, water bottles, eating utensils, food, kissing, etc.
- Living in close conditions (such as sharing a room/suite in a dorm or group home).

What are the Possible Consequences of the Disease?

- Death (in 8 to 24 hours from perfectly well to dead)
- Permanent brain damage
- Kidney failure
- Hearing loss
- Blindness
- Convulsions
- Gangrene that requires amputation
- Coma
- Limb damage (finger, toes, arms, legs)
- Learning disability

Can the Disease be Treated?

- Antibiotic treatment, if received early, can save lives and chances of recovery are increased. However, permanent disability or death can still occur.
- Vaccinations are available and should be considered for:
 - Those living in close quarters
 - College students 25 years old or younger
- Vaccinations are effective against 4 of the 5 most common bacterial types that cause 70% of the disease in the U.S. (but does not protect against all types of meningitis).
- Vaccinations take 7-10 days to become effective, with protection lasting 3-5 years.
- The cost of vaccine varies, so check with your health care provider.
- Vaccination is very safe. Most common side effects are redness and minor pain at injection site for up to two days.
- Vaccination is available at your local health care provider or county/regional department of health office.

How can I find out more Information?

- Contact your own health care provider
- Contact your local Texas Department of Health office.
- Check out the following web sites:
 - [Centers For Disease Control](#)
 - [American College Health Association](#)