The ongoing serogroup B meningococcal disease outbreak at Princeton University brings national attention to an issue of longstanding importance to the college health community. The dramatic decline in cases of meningococcal disease since the late 1990s coincides with the widespread use of the quadrivalent meningococcal vaccine in adolescents and students entering college.

Important Points to Remember:

Outbreaks of serogroup B meningococcal disease are rare. Cases of meningococcal disease are reportable in every state, and no spread beyond the Princeton campus has occurred or is expected.

It is well known that the close quarters of campus residence hall living puts students at increased risk for meningococcal disease. **Below are ways to prevent this or other infectious diseases from spreading:**

* Take this opportunity to check your quadrivalent meningococcal vaccine status. Make sure you had a booster dose before entering college if the first dose was given prior to age 16.

* Practice good hygiene measures such as not smoking, avoiding secondhand smoke, and not sharing drinking and eating utensils and other items that have contacted saliva. Similarly, wash your hands regularly, get plenty of rest, eat a balanced diet and exercise regularly to keep your immune system at its best.

* Know the signs: Meningitis infection symptoms may appear with a sudden onset of fever, headache, and stiff neck. It will often have other symptoms, such as

  • Nausea
  • Vomiting
  • Increased sensitivity to light (photophobia)
  • Altered mental status (confusion)
  • Body rash

The symptoms of bacterial meningitis can appear quickly or over several days. Typically they develop within 3-7 days after exposure.

Antibiotics can treat this illness, but early treatment provides the best chance of a full recovery.

We encourage you to follow ongoing updates from the CDC on their Meningococcal Disease [http://www.cdc.gov/meningococcal/vaccine-serogroupB.html] page.