Meningococcal Infection and Immunization Facts
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You may have heard in the news of some recent cases of meningococcal infection at Princeton and UCSB. This bacterial illness occurs in about 3,000 Americans each year and is responsible for approximately 300 deaths annually. A small number of cases (100 to 125) of meningococcal disease occur annually on college campuses. Studies have revealed that undergraduate students living in on-campus residences have 2.5 to 5 times the annual risk of the general population or about 3 cases per 100,000 students yearly. Students living off-campus actually had lower rates of disease than the comparably aged general population.

Several "strains" of the meningococcal bacteria cause disease, which can range from an infection of the brain called meningitis to a generalized infection causing loss of limbs and the shutdown of other organs. A vaccine is available at SDSU Student Health Services that has about an 85% effectiveness in protecting against 4 strains of meningococcus that are responsible for about two-thirds of cases. There is no FDA-approved vaccine that protects against serogroup B, the strain that causes one-third of infections and is associated with the Princeton students.

The Center for Disease Control's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices recommends vaccination for all 11-18 year olds and well as college freshmen living in dormitories. Other students wishing to reduce their risk for meningococcal infection may also choose to be vaccinated. It is best to be immunized as early as possible in the fall (or even before coming to school) to reduce your risk.

Meningococcal vaccine is available at SDSU Student Health Services for $91. Vaccination is generally well tolerated. Side effects of the injection are infrequent and consist principally of pain and redness at the injection site for 1-2 days. If you desire an immunization, please call Student Health Services at 619-594-4736 to make an appointment.

For more information on meningococcal infections, see http://www.cdc.gov/meningococcal/about/index.html

Gregg A. Lichtenstein, MD, MBA
Director
SDSU Student Health Services