

## ***Meningococcal Meningitis (Bacterial) – Fact Sheet***

- Meningitis is an infection of the fluid of a person’s spinal cord and the fluid that surrounds the brain. Meningitis is usually caused by a viral or bacterial infection.
- Meningococcal or Bacterial Meningitis – which is severe and may result in brain damage, hearing loss or death – is contagious and requires immediate treatment. Viral Meningitis is generally less severe and resolves itself without specific treatment.
- Meningococcal Meningitis is a rare but potentially fatal disease. Every year, 3,000 Americans get Meningococcal disease, and 10% of these patients usually die within 48 hours. Meningitis can also cause hearing loss, brain damage, loss of limbs and psychological complications.
- Early diagnosis and treatment are very important. Bacterial Meningitis can be treated with a number of effective antibiotics, usually Ceftriaxone or Cipro.
- Close patient contacts such as family members, roommates, athletic team members, health care providers and classroom contacts are also given one dose of an antibiotic to help prevent infection.
- Bacterial Meningitis is spread through the exchange of respiratory and throat secretions (coughing, kissing) with someone who is ill or is a carrier of the bacteria. (One-third of adults carry the bacteria without symptoms or infection.) Meningitis is not spread by casual contact or by breathing the air where a person with Meningitis has been.
- The risk of getting Meningitis increases in teens and young adults, ages 15-24, especially among people living in a dorm, crowded situations and having increased social contacts such as kissing, sharing drinking glasses, water bottles, cigarettes and eating utensils.
- High fever, severe headache and stiff neck are common symptoms of Meningitis. These symptoms progress rapidly and can develop over several hours or 1-2 days. Other symptoms include nausea and vomiting, light sensitivity, confusion, rash and seizures. It is important to seek medical care immediately.
- A vaccine is available to help prevent infection. While this vaccine is not required, Columbus Public Health strongly encourages this shot for teens starting at 11 or 12 years old and especially for college students living in a dorm.