

# WEST LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

DEPARTMENT OF STUDENT HEALTH SERVICES  
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Dear Student and Parent:

As the Director of Health Services at West Liberty University, I am writing to inform you about meningococcal disease, a potentially fatal bacterial infection commonly referred to as meningitis, and recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

In October 1999, the CDC's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) voted to recommend that college students, particularly freshmen living in dormitories and residence halls, be educated about meningitis and the benefits of vaccination. In 2010, the ACIP continued recommendations that the meningococcal vaccine (for types A,C,Y,W) be administered to all adolescents (11-12 years old) and college freshmen. WV state law now requires that all children entering 7<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade in WV must show proof of immunity to meningococcal disease. This 12<sup>th</sup> grade requirement allows for immunity to extend through the student's college years. These recommendations are based on studies showing that college students, particularly freshmen living in residence halls, have a six times increased risk for meningitis. Types A,C,Y,W account for nearly two-thirds of all meningococcal disease. Due to this risk, proof of the Meningitis Vaccine (type A,C,Y,W) is mandatory for all incoming students planning to live in on-campus housing.

In late 2014 a new kind of Meningitis vaccine was approved in the US to protect against the remaining one-third of bacterial meningitis cases caused by Type B strain (Bexsero, Trumenba). In June 2015, the ACIP recommended that "adolescents and young adults 16-23 may be vaccinated with a new (MenB) vaccine to provide short term protection against most strains of serogroup B meningococcal disease." Over 40 cases of Type B meningococcal disease have occurred on college campuses since 2009. While this Type B Meningitis Vaccine is not mandatory, it is recommended.

Bacterial meningitis is rare. However, when it strikes, its flu-like symptoms make diagnosis difficult. If not treated early, meningitis can lead to swelling of the fluid surrounding the brain and spinal column as well as severe and permanent disabilities, such as hearing loss, brain damage, seizures, limb amputation and even death.

Incidence of meningococcal disease has decreased since the year 2000 likely due to vaccination efforts; however, cases of meningitis among teens and young adults 15 to 24 years of age (the age of most college students) continue to peak. The disease strikes about 600-1,000 Americans each year and 10-15% will die. 21% of all cases occur in pre-teens, teens, and young adults. Of these young adults, many are college students living in residence halls on college campuses. Two different vaccines are available here at the Student Health Service. Most insurance companies are covering the cost of the vaccinations when given at a physician's office or pharmacy. The WLU Student Health Service does not bill insurance.

- Meningitis Vaccine (Menactra®-A/C/Y/W) consists of a one-time dose. At the West Liberty University Student Health Service the fee is **\$115.00**.
- Meningitis B Vaccine (Bexsero®) consists of two doses, 1 month apart. At the West Liberty University Student Health Service the fee is **\$160.00 for each dose**. Two doses must be given to achieve immunity.

For students wishing to receive the vaccine at the Student Health Service, a Meningitis Pre-Payment Form can be found on the Health Service website under the *forms tab* at [www.westliberty.edu/health-services/](http://www.westliberty.edu/health-services/). This form is to be completed and mailed with payment to the address listed on the form. If your son or daughter is under the age of 18, a Meningitis under 18 Consent form must be completed in addition to the pre-payment form. Due to the cost and availability of the vaccine, we must ask for payment in advance so that we may order the vaccine for you. The vaccine will be ordered when students come to campus. You may pay by check or charge the fee to your student account. **Please do not mail cash.** (Pregnant women, students with acute illness at the time of the vaccine administration, students with an allergic reaction to natural rubber latex or any components of the vaccine should not receive the vaccine.)

Sincerely,

Christy Bennington, RN, Director of Health Services

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