



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Wolf Administration Reminds College Students and Families of Meningitis Vaccine Requirements

Harrisburg, PA - As students across Pennsylvania prepare to head to college campuses this fall, the Wolf Administration is reminding all students, parents and guardians that most schools require students receive the meningococcal vaccine before they can attend classes.

"Preparing for college can be a stressful period for parents, as there are many costs to consider with tuition, books, dorm necessities, and other expenses," Insurance Commissioner Jessica Altman said. "Thankfully, immunizations aren't one of them, as most insurance plans cover school vaccinations with no cost to the consumer."

In 2002, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania College and University Student Vaccination Act passed, requiring all students residing in college or university-owned housing to have at least one dose of the meningococcal conjugate vaccine. If the student is under 18, a parent or guardian may sign a waiver declining the vaccine after being given information on the disease.

It is important to know that there are two types of meningococcal vaccines. One is the required meningococcal conjugate vaccine, which is recommended to be given to those 11-12 years old with a booster dose recommended at age 16. However, this vaccine does not protect against meningococcal B, which is the type of meningitis that has been observed recently at colleges and universities. Teens and young adults are encouraged to receive the meningococcal B vaccine, which is also covered by insurance.

Meningococcus bacteria spreads easily through coughing and sneezing. Common symptoms include high fever, headache, stiff neck, nausea, vomiting, sensitivity to light and confusion. College students, especially those living in residence halls, are more prone to contracting the disease because of their proximity to each other on a daily basis. Frequent hand washing is recommended to prevent the spread of the disease. Last year, there were three cases of meningococcal disease among college age students, including two on a college campus.

"Under the Affordable Care Act, most private insurance plans are required to cover vaccinations listed by the federal Centers For Disease Control, such as the meningococcal vaccine for most first-year residential college students, as a preventive service without charging a copayment or coinsurance," Altman said. "It is important to make sure that the doctor or provider who administers the immunization is within your health insurance plan's network, or you could be responsible for the cost."

For consumers without insurance or insurance coverage that does not cover vaccinations, the Department of Health offers immunizations year-round at the [State Health Centers](#). This includes both the meningococcal conjugate vaccine and the meningococcal B vaccine.

“It is essential that students are up-to-date on all vaccinations before entering college, particularly the meningitis vaccine,” Secretary of Health Dr. Rachel Levine said. “Meningitis is a serious disease that can spread very easily and can be fatal. Vaccinations are a safe and effective way to protect yourself and others from a number of serious, life-threatening diseases.”

To learn more about meningitis, review the Pennsylvania Department of Health’s [Fact Sheet](#).

If you have any questions about insurance coverage, visit the Pennsylvania Insurance Department website www.insurance.pa.gov or call the Consumer Services Bureau hotline at 1-877-881-6388.

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