

Dear Parent:

On behalf of Salve Regina University, I am writing to inform you about meningococcal disease, a rare, but potentially fatal, bacterial infection commonly referred to as *meningitis*, and a new immunization recommendation that may affect your college-bound child.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the American College Health Association (ACHA) have approved new recommendations that urge all first-year students living in residence halls to be immunized against meningococcal disease. The CDC and ACHA recommendations further state that other college students under 25 years of age who wish to reduce their risk for the disease may choose to be vaccinated. Meningococcal disease strikes 1,400 to 3,000 Americans each year and is responsible for approximately 150 to 300 deaths. Adolescents and young adults account for nearly 30 percent of all cases of meningitis in the United States. In addition, approximately 100 to 125 cases of meningococcal disease occur on college campuses each year, and five to 15 students will die as a result.

A reformulated meningococcal vaccine (“conjugate”) is now available that has the potential to provide longer duration of protection against four of the five strains (or types) of bacteria that cause meningococcal disease – types A, C, Y, and W-135.

Due to lifestyle factors, such as crowded living situations, bar patronage, active or passive smoking, irregular sleep patterns, and sharing of personal items, college students living in residence halls are more likely to acquire meningococcal disease than the general college population.

Meningococcal infection is contagious, and progresses very rapidly. It can easily be misdiagnosed as the flu, and, if not treated early, meningitis can lead to death or permanent disabilities. One in five of those who survive will suffer from long-term side effects, such as brain damage, hearing loss, seizures, or limb amputation.

For more information, please feel free to contact our health service and/or consult your child’s physician. You also can find information about the disease and immunization by visiting the Salve Regina University website, www.salve.edu, the ACHA website, www.acha.org/meningitis, and the CDC website, www.cdc.gov/ncidod/diseases/submenus/sub_meningitis.htm.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Mary Kay Connell, RNP".

Mary Kay Connell, RNP
Director, University Health Services
Salve Regina University