

## **PSU holds second meningitis vaccination clinic**

Pittsburg State University will hold the second of two planned meningitis vaccination clinics from noon until 4 p.m. on Thursday, Sept. 1, in the Overman Student Center. The cost of the vaccinations is \$90 and students may make payment by cash, check or credit card. They may also have the vaccination billed to their personal university account.

Pittsburg State has waged an aggressive publicity campaign in recent weeks promoting the vaccinations. Student Health Center officials said the good turnout at the first clinic, which was held on Aug. 26, is some indication that the campaign is working. Many of the students at the first clinic admitted that they were getting the shots at the direction of their parents, who have also received the information on the vaccinations.

Nationally, immunization experts are urging parents and college students, particularly those who live in dormitories, to learn about potentially fatal bacterial meningitis and the benefits of vaccination to prevent the disease.

A new recommendation, approved by the immunization advisory committee of the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), advocates that college students, particularly freshmen living in residence halls, be educated about meningococcal meningitis and the benefits of vaccination.

The panel based its recommendation on recent studies showing that certain college students, particularly freshman living in residence halls, have a six-fold increased risk for meningitis. The recommendation further states that the vaccine should be available to these freshman and other undergraduate students who wish to reduce their risk for the disease.

Cases of meningitis among teens and young adults 15 to 24 years of age – the age of most college students – have doubled since 1991. The disease strikes about 3,000 Americans each year and claims 300 lives. It is estimated that between 100 and 125 meningitis cases occur on college campuses and as many as 15 students will die from the disease.

“Meningococcal meningitis is a rare but potentially fatal disease with early symptoms that resemble the flu, making diagnosis difficult,” said Dr. David Parris M.D., medical director of Pittsburg State University Health Services.

**(More)**

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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 amputations and even death.

Meningococcal bacteria are transmitted through air droplets and by direct contact with infected persons. It occurs most often in late winter and early spring – when most college students are away at school. Symptoms include high fever, severe headache, stiff neck, confusion, nausea, vomiting, exhaustion and/or rash.

“Parents and students should be aware of the relative risks of meningococcal meningitis on campus and that a vaccine is available that could help prevent the disease,” Parris said. “For that purpose Pittsburg State University is taking a proactive approach in offering a meningococcal meningitis vaccination clinic available to any interested student.”

The university is promoting this clinic through letters to parents, campus posters, emails to students, speaking to Freshman Experience classes, and press releases to appropriate media sources both on and off campus.

A vaccine is available against four strains of the bacteria that cause meningococcal meningitis in the United States - types A, C, Y and W-135 – which account for nearly two thirds of the cases among college students.

Information about meningococcal meningitis and the vaccination clinic is available by calling Pittsburg State University Health Services at 620-235-4452, or at the university Web site, [www.pittstate.edu/health](http://www.pittstate.edu/health). You can also visit the Web sites of the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), [www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dbmd/diseaseinfo](http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dbmd/diseaseinfo), and the American College Health Association, [www.acha.org](http://www.acha.org).

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