



Meningitis Vaccination Waiver / Form

Georgia passed House Bill 521 on May 28, 2003 requiring all students wishing to reside in University owned housing to provide either proof of vaccination for meningitis or a signed waiver requesting exemption after having received information on the risks with meningococcal disease and the availability and effectiveness of the vaccine.

Meningococcal disease is a serious disease that can lead to death within only a few hours of onset; one in ten cases is fatal; and one in seven survivors of the disease is left with severe disability, such as the loss of a limb, mental retardation, paralysis, deafness, or seizures. Meningococcal disease is contagious but a largely preventable infection of the spinal cord fluid and the fluid that surrounds the brain. Scientific evidence suggests that college students living in dormitory facilities are at a moderately increased risk of contracting meningococcal disease; and immunization against meningococcal disease will decrease the risk of the disease.

What is meningococcal meningitis? Meningitis is rare. But when it strikes, this potentially fatal bacterial disease can lead to swelling of 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.

How is it spread? Meningococcal meningitis is spread through the air via respiratory secretions or close contact with an infected person. This can include coughing, sneezing, kissing or sharing items like utensils, cigarettes and drinking glasses.

What are the symptoms? Symptoms of meningococcal meningitis often resemble the flu and can include high fever, severe headache, stiff neck, rash, nausea, vomiting, lethargy and confusion.

Who is at risk? Certain college students, particularly freshmen who live in residence halls, have been found to have an increased risk for meningococcal meningitis. Other undergraduates should also consider vaccination to reduce their risk for the disease.

Can meningitis be prevented? Yes. A safe and effective vaccine is available to protect against four of the five most common strains of the disease. The vaccine provides protection for approximately three to five years. Adverse reactions to the meningitis vaccine are mild and infrequent, consisting primarily of redness and pain at the injection site and rarely a fever. As with any vaccine, vaccination against meningitis may not protect 100% of all susceptible individuals. It does not protect against viral meningitis.

For more information: To learn more about meningitis and vaccine, visit the web sites of the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dbmd/diseaseinfo; the American College Health Association, www.acha.org; and, the National Meningitis Association, www.nmaus.org/index2.htm. If you have questions call the Herschel A. Health Center (229) 931-2235.

MENINGOCOCCAL VACCINATION WAIVER

I, _____ received and reviewed the information provided by Georgia Southwestern State University regarding meningococcal disease. I am fully aware of the risks associated with meningococcal disease and of the availability and effectiveness of the vaccinations against the disease. I knowingly decided not to receive a vaccination against meningococcal disease for religious or other reasons (please list):

MENINGOCOCCAL VACCINATION VERIFICATION

Date received _____ (Attach proof of vaccination)

Print Name

Social Security Number (optional)

Signature of Student

Signature of Parent