

IMMUNIZATION POLICY

In accordance with the Pennsylvania College and University Student Vaccination Act of Jun. 28, 2002, P.L. 492, No. 83, all students wishing to reside in PTC owned housing are to provide either proof of vaccination for meningitis or a signed waiver requesting exemption after having received information on the risks associated with meningococcal disease and the availability and effectiveness of the vaccine.

College students are at increased risk for meningococcal disease, a potentially fatal bacterial infection commonly referred to as meningitis. In fact, first-year students living in College or University-owned housing are found to have a six-fold increased risk for the disease. The American College Health Association recommends that college students, particularly first-year students living in student housing, learn more about meningitis and vaccination. At least 70% of all cases of meningococcal disease in college students are vaccine preventable.

PTC recommends that every student who enrolls at PTC, including those who do not reside in student housing, receive the meningitis vaccination.

MENINGOCOCCAL MENINGITIS

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.

In addition to the meningitis vaccination, PTC suggests that all enrolling students receive immunizations against the following diseases:

MEASLES, MUMPS, RUBELLA VACCINE (MMR)

Measles is a highly contagious virus that can be spread by coming into contact with an infected person or the infected person's saliva through coughing and sneezing. It can cause serious illnesses such as pneumonia and encephalitis (inflammation of the brain). Two doses can provide lifelong protection. The vaccine can be administered alone, or as part of the combination Measles, Mumps and Rubella shot.

Rubella is caused by a virus that is spread by contact with infected people or their articles that they have used. Rubella is especially dangerous for the fetus during the first three months of pregnancy. The pregnant woman may miscarry, or the baby may be born with birth defects. The vaccine can be administered alone, or as part of the combination Measles, Mumps and Rubella shot.

Mump is mainly a disease of young children, but approximately 15% of reported cases have occurred in teen and adults. Mumps can cause deafness, encephalitis, meningitis, and rarely, sterility. The vaccine is administered as part of the combination Measles, Mumps and Rubella shot.

Two doses of the MMR vaccine are needed. The first dose must be given after the first birthday and the second dose given at least one month later, or a blood test verifying immunity.

HEPATITIS B VACCINE:

Hepatitis B is a serious liver disease caused by a virus. The virus can be spread by coming into contact with the blood or other bodily fluids of an infected person. Hepatitis B can cause inflammation of the liver, which can lead to serious illness, cancer, or liver failure. Immunity is achieved by receiving a series of three injections over a six month period.

TETANUS-DIPHTHERIA-PERTUSSIS VACCINE (TD OR TDAP)

Pertussis has become more prevalent in the U.S. over the last 20 years, especially among adolescents and adults. Pertussis can be spread easily which makes the infection difficult to control once it is established. The use of antibiotics does not

significantly alter the course of the infection once you acquire a cough related to Pertussis. One-time use of Tdap is recommended for adults between the ages of 19 and 64.

One dose of Td (Tetanus-Diphtheria Vaccine) or Tdap (Tetanus Toxoid, Reduced Diphtheria Toxoid and Acellular Pertussis Vaccine) within the last ten years.

Three doses of the TD or TDap are needed. The first two doses are given one month apart and the third dose 4-6 months after the first, or a blood test verifying immunity.

VARICELLA VACCINE

Chickenpox (varicella) is a viral infection that causes an itchy rash with small, fluid-filled blisters. Chickenpox is highly contagious to people who haven't had the disease or been vaccinated against it. Before routine chickenpox vaccination, virtually all people had been infected by the time they reached adulthood, sometimes with serious complications. Today, the number of cases and hospitalizations is down dramatically.

For most people, chickenpox is a mild disease. Still, it's better to get vaccinated. The chickenpox vaccine is a safe, effective way to prevent chickenpox and its possible complications.

Two doses of chicken pox vaccine given at least one month apart, or a blood test verifying immunity, or a history of disease.

EXEMPTIONS:

Students may be exempted from the immunization requirements if there is a medical contradiction or if religious/moral/ethical belief prohibits immunizations. Students who choose not to receive a meningitis vaccination must sign a waiver prior to staying in on- or off-campus student housing. The waiver is located on the Medical Information form on the student's dashboard, or on the 3rd Floor of the Academic Building in the Resident Life/Student Services area.

Please note: Students in health professional programs may have additional immunization requirements. Please check with your program.

Failure to comply with the meningitis vaccination requirement will prevent a student from obtaining an assigned apartment key.