How Effective is the Meningococcal Meningitis Vaccine?
The meningococcal meningitis vaccine is available against four types of the bacterium Neisseria meningitidis that causes meningococcal meningitis in the United States - serogroups A, C, Y and W-135.

These four serogroups account for nearly two-thirds of the cases of meningococcal meningitis in the college-aged population.

The vaccine can be used in adults and children greater than two years old.

The vaccine is 85% to 100% effective in preventing meningococcal meningitis in serogroups A, C, Y and W-135 in older children and adults.

Protection lasts approximately three to five years; the length of time most students are away at college.

What is the Meningitis Foundation of America (MFA)?
MFA provides education to the public and medical professionals about meningitis so that its early diagnosis and treatment will save lives.

Supports the development of vaccines and other means of treating and/or preventing meningitis.

Provides educational and emotional support to sufferers of meningitis and their families.

Where Can I Get More Information?

Consult your own physician.

Texas Department of Health office in Austin, Texas at (512) 458-7111 or 1-888-963-7111.

Medical Exemption
Per the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board rules regarding medical exemption: (1) an affidavit or a certificate signed by a physician who is duly registered and licensed to practice medicine in the United States, in which it is stated that, in the physician's opinion, the vaccination required would be injurious to the health and well-being of the student.

Chapter 21, Subchapter T, Sections 21.610 through 21.614
Meningococcal (muh-NIN-jah-kah-kul) meningitis is a rare but potentially fatal bacterial infection. The disease is most commonly expressed as meningitis, an attack of the brain and spinal cord, or meningococcemia, a presence of bacteria in the blood. It can result in permanent damage, hearing loss, learning disability, organ failure, loss of limbs or death.

Certain college students may be at increased risk for meningococcal meningitis. In fact, freshman living in dormitories have been found to have a six-fold increased risk for the disease, compared to all undergraduates.

As of January 1, 2014, all entering students at an institution of higher education are required to show proof of an initial meningococcal vaccination or a booster dose during the five-year period, prior to enrolling [SB 62, 83rd (R) Texas Legislature]. They must get the vaccine at least 10 days before the semester begins. See the exemptions section for information on exemptions from these requirements.

Who is an entering college student (required to receive meningococcal vaccine)?
- A first-time student of an institution of higher education or a private or independent institution of higher education.
- A transfer student from another institution.
- A returning student who attended college before January 1, 2012, who is enrolling in the same or another institution of higher education following a break in enrollment of at least one fall or spring semester.

Which students are NOT required to receive meningococcal vaccine?
- Students 22 years of age or older by the first day of the start of the semester.
- Students enrolled only in online or other distance education courses.
- Students enrolled in a continuing education course or program that is less than 360 contact hours, or continuing education corporate training.
- Students enrolled in a dual credit course which is taught at a public or private K-12 facility not located on a higher education institution campus.
- Students incarcerated in a Texas prison.
- Students who are not enrolled in an institution of higher education.
- Students submitting an affidavit or a certificate signed by a physician who is duly registered and licensed and in good standing to practice medicine in the United States, stating that, in the physician’s opinion, the vaccination required would be injurious to the health and well-being of the student.
- Students who submit an affidavit form signed by the student (or parent/legal guardian/managing conservator, if applicable) stating the student declines the vaccination for bacterial meningitis for reasons of conscience, including a religious belief.
- For students obtaining exemptions from vaccination. These exemptions do not apply during a disaster or public health emergency, terrorist attack, hostile army or paramilitary action, or an extraordinary law enforcement emergency declared by an appropriate official or authority from the Texas Department of State Health Services and in effect for the location of the institution the student attends.

What Causes Meningococcal Meningitis?
Meningococcal meningitis is caused by the bacterium Neisseria meningitides, a leading cause of meningitis and/or blood poisoning in teenagers and young adults in the United States.

How Common is Meningococcal Meningitis?
Meningococcal meningitis strikes about 3,000 Americans each year, causing more than 300 deaths annually.

It is estimated that 100 to 125 cases of meningococcal meningitis occur annually on college campuses and that up to 80% of college cases are vaccine preventable.

How is Meningococcal Meningitis Spread?
Meningococcal meningitis is transmitted through air droplets and direct contact with infected persons (e.g., coughing, kissing, sharing a drinking glass or cigarette, etc.).

It occurs most often in late winter and early spring - at a time when most college students are away at school.

What are the Symptoms of Meningococcal Meningitis?
Symptoms of meningococcal meningitis are often misdiagnosed as something less serious.

Symptoms can resemble the flu and may include high fever, headache, stiff neck, confusion, vomiting, exhaustion and/or a rash.

If not detected early, the disease can progress, often within hours of the first signs of symptoms.

Who is at Risk for Meningococcal Meningitis?
Studies show 15 to 24 year olds are at greater risk of getting meningococcal meningitis, and in recent years there has been an increase in the number of college outbreaks.

Certain lifestyle factors common among college students appear to be linked to the disease, including communal living (such as dormitories), bar patronage, smoking and irregular sleep patterns.

Recent data also show students living in dormitories, particularly freshman, have a six-fold increased risk for the disease, compared to all undergraduates.