

Dear Campus Community,

Following additional, extensive testing of the two student cases of meningococcal disease on campus, University Health Services (UHS), in concert with the Massachusetts Department of Public Health and the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), has determined that because the two cases originated from a single strain of genetically identical organisms, this meningococcal disease should be considered an outbreak. The CDC conducted the testing.

As a result, University Health Services is recommending that students at the highest risk receive serogroup B vaccinations at a series of four walk-in clinics during the next two weeks. Those at the highest risk include: all undergraduates, graduate students living in undergraduate housing, and all students with conditions such as asplenia, a complement deficiency, sickle cell anemia or those taking the medication Solaris. This includes both on-campus and off-campus students.

CDC protocols do not consider faculty and staff to be within this risk group, except for those with the conditions listed above. Faculty and staff who are concerned about exposure to meningitis or are interested in being vaccinated are encouraged to contact their primary care provider.

Updates, frequently asked questions and details about insurance will be posted at www.umass.edu/meningitis.

These further measures to protect the campus community reinforce decisions made by the university to begin vaccinating over the past two weeks. Meningococcal B vaccine has been administered by appointment to more than 1,400 students so far, but additional action to reduce risk is best accomplished through large walk-in clinics. We will need your utmost cooperation and attendance to protect you from this preventable, serious illness. Meanwhile, the campus will safely maintain regular operations. There are no plans to interrupt any classes, attendance or housing at UMass due to Meningococcus B.

The large-scale vaccination clinics will be held from noon to 6 p.m. in the Cape Cod Lounge of the Student Union on:

- Thursday, November 30, first and second-year students preferred
- Friday, December 1, first and second-year students preferred
- Monday, December 4, third and fourth-year students preferred
- Tuesday, December 5, third and fourth-year students preferred

To make the process as orderly as possible for everyone involved, we encourage you to follow the suggested day of participation, but we understand if your schedule makes that difficult. Graduate students should select any of the four days.

UHS also continues to advise the campus community to take health smart precautions. Don't swap saliva. Avoid sharing food, drinks and personal items that contact saliva, including drinks from punch bowls. Wash hands with soap and water or hand sanitizer. Cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue or your sleeve. Don't touch your eyes, nose, or mouth—germs spread easily this way. If you are sick, have fever, or other concerns, UHS is here to help you.

Vaccination Insurance

Because the current situation is an outbreak, your health insurance or prescription plan should cover this vaccination, and UHS will take steps to bill insurance for the service. Please remember to bring your insurance card with you to the clinic. In any case, undergraduate students who attend the clinics will be provided the vaccine, no matter the ability to pay. Students will not incur any costs associated with co-pays, deductibles or insurance denials. Here are some insurance tips that should ease the process for everyone:

- Before attending the vaccination clinics, students or their family members are encouraged to contact their private insurance provider regarding coverage of the vaccine.
- Please download and fill out this [Referral Request form](#) and bring it to the clinic, which will provide authorization to receive the vaccine through UHS.
- When speaking with your insurance representative, it is important to mention that the UMass Amherst campus has designated “outbreak status” from federal and state public health officials.
- Many insurance companies will require that your primary care provider obtain a pre-authorization number. Please try to contact your provider before coming to the clinic.
- Consolidated Health Plan, the university-sponsored health insurance, will cover the cost of the vaccine at 100 percent with no preauthorization or referral required.

Thank you in advance for your full participation and cooperation. We appreciate you taking the steps required to keep our campus a safe and healthy place.

Sincerely,

George A. Corey, M.D.
Executive Director
University Health Services