

To the Campus Community,

University Health Services is writing to you today to deliver an update on the two cases of meningococcal disease on campus. We want to emphasize that the risk of invasive meningococcal disease in any individual student is very low and that following health-smart practices will prevent the spread of the disease.

It is not unusual for speculation and false reports to surface in the midst public health warnings. We are writing to provide you the latest facts and public health guidance, based on our close coordination with the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH) and the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Specifically:

- There is no third case of meningitis. If a new case does occur, it would be announced through official channels, such as e-mail to UMass faculty, staff, students and parents and the university's website.
- UHS has plenty of Serogroup B vaccine on hand and is vaccinating students by appointment. We will be offering vaccinations today and tomorrow as well as next Monday and Tuesday, Nov. 20-21, during the Thanksgiving holiday break. Please call 413-577-5101 to schedule an appointment. Costs for vaccination are billed to your insurance company. Please bring your insurance card to your appointment.
- Meningococcus B is not spread through sweat. It is safe to go to the Recreation Center and use the exercise equipment, and to swim in university pools. Do not share water bottles while working out.
- Meningococcus B is not spread through food or on the surface of washed dishes or eating utensils. Eating in UMass dining facilities is safe. You should avoid sharing utensils, cups or glasses while eating.
- There is no reason for students or staff to wear masks or gloves. Meningococcus B is spread through saliva. You cannot catch it by breathing air or casual touching.
- Meningococcal bacteria are not spread by shaking hands, breathing the air where a person with meningitis has been, touching doorknobs, clothing, sports or fitness equipment, or food.
- There are no plans to interrupt any classes, attendance or housing at UMass due to Meningococcus B.

- State MDPH officials issued an advisory to all health care providers in Massachusetts regarding the two cases confirmed at UMass, asking them to be alert for cases compatible with the disease. The Serogroup B vaccine may be available through your local health care provider during the Thanksgiving break.
- Finally, I encourage you to continue observing the health smart tips that we have been publicizing to prevent the spread of meningococcal disease. These measures, recommended by the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention include: Do not share anything that comes in contact with the mouth – water bottles, mouth guards, face masks, towels, drinking glasses, eating utensils, cosmetics, toothbrushes, smoking materials, kisses, drinks from a common source such as a punch bowl. Also, please wash your hands, and cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue or your sleeve.

As always, UHS is here to help you. If you have concerns or questions, please contact the UHS triage nurse at 413-577-5229.

Additional information on bacterial meningitis may be found at: <http://www.mass.gov/eohhs/docs/dph/cdc/factsheets/m-o/meningococcal-college-students.pdf>, or by calling the Massachusetts Department of Public Health's Division of Epidemiology and Immunization at 617-983-6800.

Sincerely,

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