



Meningitis B Vaccination at Acadia University Student, Parent, Staff and Faculty FAQ

In February 2015, there were two students at Acadia University with the B strain of meningococcal meningitis. According to Public Health, two cases in one location is considered an institutional outbreak. Public Health and the university are working closely to take all the appropriate steps to keep everyone healthy in the Acadia community.

When are the vaccination clinics?

Public Health held vaccination clinics for the first dose of the vaccine in late February and early March. Clinics for the second dose of vaccine will take place in the Fountain Commons on March 30, 31 and April 1 from 12-8 p.m. and April 8 and 9 from 12-4 p.m.

Are you vaccinating all Acadia students, faculty and staff?

The vaccination is for all students, and for any faculty or staff who have certain health conditions that would put them at greater risk than the general population. These conditions are not having a spleen or having a spleen that does not work, and specific immune disorders including complement, properdin, factor D, HIV, or primary antibody deficiencies.

Will there be a cost to students, faculty and staff?

There will be no cost to students, faculty or staff who are vaccinated by Public Health at the on-campus clinic.

Is the vaccination mandatory?

It is not mandatory, but we strongly encourage all students to get the vaccination, as well as faculty and staff with the above-noted health conditions.

If it takes two doses, does that mean I won't have full immunity after one dose?

The first dose provides good immunity. The second dose strengthens immunity and ensures it is long lasting.

Why not vaccinate against all strains?

The risk of spreading the disease remains low. From a public health perspective, the best course of action is to vaccinate against strain B which has caused two meningitis cases at Acadia.

Why not vaccinate all faculty and staff?

First, the two cases at Acadia are in the student population, not the faculty or staff population, so the vaccination program is mainly targeting the student population. Second, meningitis most often affects infants, teenagers and seniors. Unless faculty and staff have one of the above-noted health conditions, they are not in a risk group for getting the disease.

**Should classes be cancelled to prevent the disease from spreading?**

No. The risk is low because meningitis is not spread as easily as the cold or flu. You can't get it by touching a surface such as a doorknob that an infected person has touched. The bacteria that can cause meningitis are spread by direct secretions from the nose and mouth through activities such as kissing, and sharing food, drinks, water bottles, toothbrushes, eating utensils or cigarettes. Avoiding these activities helps prevent the spread of the disease.

Why didn't you start vaccinating before spring break?

As quickly as we moved, it still took a few days to get the vaccination clinics up and running. The risk remains low and with basic precautions being followed, there was no concern about students travelling during the break. We encouraged students to get their vaccination from Public Health at the on-campus clinic when they returned.

Is there a risk I could give the disease to my family, friends, roommates, or boyfriend/girlfriend?

The risk of spreading the bacteria that causes meningitis is low because it is not spread as easily as the cold or flu. If you avoid direct secretions from the nose and mouth through activities such as kissing, and sharing food, drinks, water bottles, toothbrushes, eating utensils or cigarettes, then the odds of you spreading the bacteria is very low.

If I want to get vaccinated off campus, what vaccine should I ask for?

Meningococcal B vaccine (Bexsero®).

How do I know if I was immunized against meningitis?

You can check with your family doctor who would have immunization records. Public health began offering vaccination against meningitis C to Grade 4 students through the school program in 2005, then switched to Grade 7 in 2007. If you are from another province, you can check their public health website for recommended immunization schedules.

Should I take antibiotics as a precaution?

No. Only people in close contact with a meningitis patient require antibiotics as a precautionary treatment. Public Health has identified the close contacts of the Acadia students and given antibiotics as appropriate. If you wish, you can talk to your doctor about your personal circumstances.

What symptoms should I watch for?

Symptoms of meningococcal meningitis may include changes in level of alertness, fever, headache, stiff neck, a rash, or sensitivity to light.



What should I do if I think I have symptoms?

Anyone with severe symptoms should go to an emergency department or call 911. If unsure, call 811 for advice in Nova Scotia or similar service in other provinces.

If you or your family doctor requires further information, or if you are concerned that you may have been directly exposed, please contact Public Health at 1-844-468-6805 (toll-free in North America).

Where can I learn more about meningitis?

You can visit novascotia.ca/meningitis.