

Dear Students and Parents:

As the Director of the University of La Verne Student Health Services, I am writing to inform you about meningococcal disease, a potentially fatal bacterial infection commonly referred to as meningitis, and the current recommendation from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

The CDC's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) recommends that college students be educated about meningitis and the benefits of vaccination. The panel based its recommendations on recent studies showing that college students, particularly freshman living in dormitories/residence halls, have a six-fold increased risk for meningitis. The recommendation further states that the information about the disease and vaccination is appropriate for other undergraduate students who also wish to reduce their risk for the disease.

Meningitis is rare. However, when it strikes, its flu-like symptoms make diagnosis difficult. If not treated early, meningitis can lead to swelling of the 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.

Cases of meningitis among teens and young adults 15 to 24 years of age (the age of most college students) have more than doubled since 1991. The disease strikes about 3,000 Americans each year and claims about 300 lives. Between 100 and 125 meningitis cases occur on college campuses nationwide and as many as 15 students will die from the disease.

Two types of meningococcal vaccines are available in the United States: Meningococcal polysaccharide (MPSV4), **Menomune** has been available since the 1970s. Meningococcal conjugate vaccines (MCV4) **Menactra** and **Menveo** were licensed in 2005 and 2010 respectively. Both vaccines protect against the four types of the bacteria that cause meningitis in the United States – types A, C, Y, and W-135. These types account for nearly two-thirds of meningitis cases among college students. Both vaccines work well and protect about 90% of those who receive it. MCV4 is considered to give better, long-lasting protection.

The Student Health Services and the American College Health Association strongly recommend that all college students receive the vaccination against meningococcal meningitis. For more information, please feel free to contact our Student Health Services and/or consult your health care provider. You can also find information about this disease on our website, <http://sites.laverne.edu/health-services/>, which links to the website for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), <http://www.cdc.gov/meningococcal/about/index.html>.

Sincerely,

Cynthia Denne

Director of Student Health Services