

TEXAS WOMAN'S UNIVERSITY

Office of Student Records

Admissions

Student Records

Academics

Financial Aid

December 6, 2011

Colleague Number: «LTREQPERSON1»

Requirement: Meningitis Vaccination – New Texas Law – Prompt Reply Requested

Dear «LRFIRSTNAME1»,

Per new Texas state legislation, and beginning Jan. 1, 2012, all new or transfer Texas college students must receive a vaccination or booster against bacterial meningitis. The vaccine is required for students of public and private colleges, undergraduate and graduate, living both on and off campus. An entering student is a new student or a student who has had a break of enrollment for one or more fall or spring semesters. Transfer students are considered entering students.

The student, or parent or guardian of the student, will be required to provide a certificate signed by a health practitioner or an official immunization record showing the student has received the bacterial meningitis vaccination or booster during the five-year period prior to enrollment, and not less than 10 days before the first day of classes. In keeping with said requirement, if currently registered for classes, your bacterial meningitis vaccination record must be received and certified through CertifiedBackground.com (*who will be sending you an email directly with instructions on how to upload your immunization records*) by close of business, Friday, January 6, 2012. Failure to meet this requirement will require the University to drop all of your classes on Sunday, January 8, 2012.

If your meningitis vaccination verification delays your ability to register until the Late Registration Period (January 17-20), please understand that you will incur the Late Registration Fee.

Please note that it could take 3-4 business days for CertifiedBackground.com to verify the Meningitis certificate from the time you upload the document. Please account for their processing time to avoid having your class schedule cancelled.

Contact your private physician or your local health department for the Bacterial Meningitis Vaccination availability.

Exceptions to Vaccination Requirement

A student is not required to submit evidence of vaccination against bacterial meningitis if:

- 30 years of age or older by the first day of the start of the semester
- Enrolled only in online or other distance education courses with no classes required on campus
- 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
- Incarcerated in a Texas prison
- New students who provide a medical doctor's excuse that states that the vaccination would be harmful to the student's health
- New students who provide documentation of a moral or conscientious objection to the vaccine by using a form promulgated by the Texas Department of State Services.

Submitting Proof of Vaccination

Texas Woman's University is partnering with CertifiedBackground.com for managing compliance with the meningitis vaccination requirement. New students (including those following a break in enrollment of at least one fall or spring semester) planning to enroll at Texas Woman's University must submit proof of meningitis vaccination directly to CertifiedBackground.com. **Students subject to the bacterial meningitis requirement will receive an e-mail from CertifiedBackground.com with instructions.** Students will not be charged for spring semester 2012 by CertifiedBackground.com for processing the documents and verifying compliance with the vaccination requirement. Acceptable evidence of vaccination may include any of the following:

- A document bearing the signature or stamp of the physician or his/her designee or public health personnel (must include the month, day and year the vaccination was administered).
- An official immunization record from a state or local health authority (must include the month, day and year the vaccination was administered).
- An official immunization record received from school officials, including a record from another state (must include the month, day and year the vaccination was administered).

Requesting an Exemption to the Vaccination Requirement

Students are encouraged to receive the meningitis vaccination because of the higher prevalence of this serious infection in adolescents and young adults. However, a student or the parent or guardian of a student may decline the meningitis vaccination for medical reasons, or for reasons of conscience. An exemption to the vaccination requirement may be requested by providing one of the following documents:

- An affidavit or certificate signed by a physician registered and licensed to practice medicine in the United States stating that in the opinion of the physician, the required meningitis vaccination would be injurious to the health and well-being of the student.
- An affidavit signed by the student stating that the student declines the meningitis vaccination for reasons of conscience, including a religious belief. A conscientious exemption form from the Texas Department of State Health Services must be used. To request an Exemption from Immunizations for Reasons of Conscience Affidavit Form, [click here](#).

The Reasons of Conscience Affidavit Form can be requested from the Department of State Health Services online, but it will be mailed to the person requesting the form. It may take up to two weeks to

receive the form. The completed affidavit or certificate must be submitted directly to CertifiedBackground.com for processing.

Where to get a Meningitis Vaccination

- Local county health departments offer meningococcal vaccinations at reduced or no cost for those students without health insurance or with limited financial resources. Call your local health department to get information about eligibility, vaccination clinic hours and cost.
- Private physicians, Pediatricians and Family Medicine in particular, often offer meningococcal vaccinations to their patients. Call your physician to ask about availability and cost of the vaccination. Check with your health insurance plan to determine if the meningococcal vaccination is covered.
- The Texas Woman's University Student Health Center offers meningococcal vaccinations for \$125. Immunizations are given between 8:00am-4:00pm Monday-Thursday and 8:00am-12:00pm & 1:00pm-4:00pm on Fridays. Call (940) 898-3826 to be sure the meningitis vaccination is available before coming to campus.
- Please visit the Texas Woman's University Student Health Center website to find a list of other sites where you can receive a vaccination. The link can be found at <http://www.twu.edu/student-health-services/bacterial-meningitis.asp>.

Meningococcal Vaccines

Meningococcal vaccines protect against four of the strains of meningococci that cause disease (A, C, Y and W-135). The vaccines are very effective and safe, but do not cover 100% of the strains that can cause meningococcal disease. Meningococcal vaccines available in the United States include:

- Menactra
- Menveo
- Menomune

Persons vaccinated with any of the above meningococcal vaccines more than five years prior to enrolling as a new student at Texas Woman's University must receive a booster dose of the vaccine. Studies have shown that protection from the vaccines diminishes significantly after five years.

About Meningococcal Meningitis

Meningitis is inflammation of the membranes that cover the brain and spinal cord. Meningitis can be caused by viruses or bacteria. Neisseria meningitidis is one of the leading causes of bacterial meningitis in the United States. The highest rates of infection with Neisseria meningitidis occur in children less than 2 years of age and adolescents and young adults aged 14-24. Most cases of meningococcal meningitis are reported from December to March, but they can occur at any time. Meningococcal meningitis is a serious infection that can progress very rapidly in a matter of hours. According to the Centers for Disease

Control and Prevention, the mortality rate for persons with meningococcal meningitis is 10-14%, but 11-19% of survivors suffer serious complications including loss of hearing, neurologic deficits and loss of limbs.

Meningococcal bacteria are present in the nose and throat of 5-10% of the population without causing the carrier any disease. However, the bacteria can be transmitted through close contact with others who are more vulnerable. Respiratory droplets or oral secretions from infected persons can spread the infection through coughing, sneezing, kissing, or sharing food, drinks, eating utensils or cigarettes.

Meningococcal illness usually develops 3-4 days after exposure, but can occur 2-10 days after exposure. The illness can be difficult to diagnose in the first few hours because some of the symptoms can be mistaken for a viral infection. Meningococcal meningitis symptoms include:

- Severe generalized headache
- Neck stiffness/pain
- Fever
- Nausea and vomiting
- Eyes sensitive to light
- Red pin-point rash or purple blotches on skin
- Confusion, sleepiness or lethargy
- Seizures

Meningococcal meningitis is a medical emergency. It is treated with intravenous antibiotics and other medications in the hospital. Delay in diagnosis and treatment can lead to serious complications or death.

Persons exposed to someone with meningococcal infection through close contact are usually treated with an antibiotic to help protect against infection. Antibiotics used for this purpose include Rocephin (injection), Ciprofloxacin (pill) or Rifampin (pill). These medications should be taken as soon as possible after an exposure.

For more information about meningitis, visit the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website](#). You may also contact TWU Student Health Services at 940-898-3826 or [CertifiedBackground.com](#) at 888-666-7788.