



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Health and Human Services
Department of Public Health
Bureau of Infectious Disease and Laboratory Sciences
305 South Street, Jamaica Plain, MA 02130

CHARLES D. BAKER
Governor

KARYN E. POLITO
Lieutenant Governor

Division of Epidemiology and Immunization

Tel: (617) 983-6800

Fax: (617) 983-6840

www.mass.gov/dph/epi

www.mass.gov/dph/imm

MARYLOU SUDDERS
Secretary

MONICA BHAREL, MD, MPH
Commissioner

Tel: 617-624-6000
www.mass.gov/dph

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TO: Healthcare Providers in Massachusetts

FROM: Alfred DeMaria, Jr., MD
Medical Director and State Epidemiologist
Bureau of Infectious Disease and Laboratory Sciences

RE: Update: Invasive Meningococcal Cases at the University of Massachusetts (UMass) Amherst

New!

Two students at UMass Amherst have been diagnosed with invasive meningococcal disease serogroup B within the past several weeks. An [update](#) describing planned vaccination clinics at UMass Amherst was issued on 11/28/2017. This is an update to the MDPH advisory of November 16, 2017. There have been no additional cases to date.

New!

Following discussions with UMass and the CDC, and informed by the results of whole genome sequencing which demonstrated that the isolates from the two patients are indistinguishable, the cases at UMass are now considered an outbreak. At the current time, serogroup B meningococcal vaccine (MenB) is now highly recommended for the following groups at UMass Amherst:

- All undergraduate students;
- Students living in undergraduate housing, and
- Persons with medical conditions that place them at high risk for invasive disease (asplenia, sickle cell disease, complement deficiencies, microbiologists routinely working with isolates, and those taking the medication eculizumab [Soliris]).

State-supplied MenB vaccine may be used for students under the age of 19.

ACTIONS REQUESTED OF ALL CLINICIANS:

1. Be alert for cases compatible with meningococcal disease (see below) in UMass Amherst students and their close contacts. Prompt recognition and antibiotic treatment of meningococcal disease is critical.
2. Immediately report all suspect cases of meningococcal disease to the MDPH at (617) 983-6800 (Suspect cases in Boston should be reported to the Boston Public Health Commission at (617) 534-5611). Do not wait for laboratory confirmation to report a clinically suspected case.
3. Obtain blood and CSF cultures prior to administration of antibiotics, if possible, to enhance detection of *N.meningitidis*.

New!

4. Vaccinate the target groups of UMass Amherst students with MenB vaccine, as described above.
5. Consider vaccinating other UMass Amherst students and staff who wish to receive MenB vaccine.

When billing for privately purchased MenB vaccine administered to students and staff at UMass Amherst, providers should indicate that UMass Amherst has been designated by public health authorities as having an outbreak of meningitis.

Symptoms of meningitis may include sudden onset of fever, headache, and stiff neck, accompanied by nausea, vomiting, photophobia, and altered mental status. Symptoms of bacteremia or septicemia may include fatigue, nausea, vomiting, cold hands and feet, chills, severe muscle aches or abdominal pain, rapid breathing, diarrhea, and appearance of a petechial or purpuric rash.

Although the risk of invasive meningococcal disease in any single university student is very low, and known close contacts of the two cases have been identified and provided chemoprophylaxis, Massachusetts healthcare providers are asked to be alert for cases compatible with meningococcal disease, and to provide MenB vaccination.

New!

The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) recommends that those at increased risk of meningococcal disease (including when an outbreak occurs) can be vaccinated with either Bexsero (MenB-4C) or Trumenba (MenB-FHbp) vaccines. Guidance about the schedules for these two MenB vaccines can be found at:

- Meningococcal Serogroup B Vaccines by Age and Risk Factor, Immunization Action Coalition <http://www.immunize.org/catg.d/p2035.pdf>

Additional guidance for providers about meningococcal vaccines can be at:

- CDC Meningococcal Vaccine Website: <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vpd/mening/hcp/index.html>

A fact sheet about serogroup B meningococcal disease can be found at:

<https://www.cdc.gov/meningococcal/downloads/17-275138D-MeningococcalDis-B-Outbreak-FS.pdf>

An MDPH fact sheet concerning invasive meningococcal disease and college students is available at <http://www.mass.gov/eohhs/docs/dph/cdc/factsheets/m-o/meningococcal-college-students.pdf>.

For questions and concerns about invasive meningococcal disease and these recommendations in Massachusetts please call the Division of Epidemiology and Immunization at 617-983-6800.