Q: What is meningitis?
A: It is the disease which causes inflammation of the tissues covering the brain and spinal cord. It can be caused by viruses, fungi and bacteria. Viral meningitis is the most common and has no specific treatment. Bacteria causing meningococcal disease is much more serious.

Q: How does meningococcal disease spread?
A: Via person-to-person through respiratory and throat secretions. So coughing, kissing and sharing eating utensils can spread the disease. Meningococcal bacteria can’t live for more than a few minutes outside of the body, so it isn’t spread as easily as a cold or the flu.

Q: How long does it take for it to show up in a person if they have been exposed?
A: The incubation period for meningococcal disease is 2 – 10 days but most often is 3-4 days. A person can become extremely ill very quickly.

Q: What are the symptoms?
A: The most common symptoms are high fever, chills, lethargy and rash. Symptoms also include headache and neck stiffness. Seizures may also occur. Very severe infections can cause shock, coma and death within several hours.

Q: Sounds pretty scary.
A: It is a very serious disease. About 9-12% of people with it die even with appropriate antibiotic treatment. Of those who recover, 20% suffer from serious after affects such as permanent hearing loss, limb loss or brain damage.

Q: How common is meningococcal disease in the US?
A: There are approximately 2,000 -3,000 cases annually. In 2009 an estimated 110 deaths occurred from it.

Q: I hear college students are more at risk for it. Is that true?
A: In recent years the proportion of cases in teens and young adults has increased. The rate of meningitis among 17 – 20 years old is about twice that of the general population. Studies have shown that college freshman living in dorms are at even an a higher risk of contracting the disease.

Q: I am 18 years old and living in MBS. What can I do to prevent getting this?
A: The most effective prevention is for you to be immunized especially because you fall into a very high risk category for contracting the disease. It is highly recommended by the American College Health Association as well as the Center for Disease Control (CDC) that college students, particularly freshman living in dorms, be vaccinated against the meningococcal disease.

Q: I already had the immunization in middle school. Do I need another shot?
A: Yes. You will need a booster dose.

Q: Where can I get the vaccine and how much does it cost?
A: At the Student Health and Counseling Center on campus. It costs $115.00. You can walk in without an appointment during immunization hours:
   Monday, Wednesday and Friday: 9 AM to noon
   Tuesday and Thursday: 1:30 PM to 3:30 PM