This information is 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) along with the recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP).

In 1997, the CDC’s Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) voted to recommend that college students, particularly freshmen living in dormitories and residence halls, be educated about meningitis and the benefits of vaccination. The panel based its recommendation on recent studies showing that college students, particularly freshmen living in dormitories, have a six-fold increased risk for meningitis. The recommendation further states that information about the disease and vaccination is appropriate for other undergraduate students who also wish to reduce their risk for the disease. This information again published in June 2000 and was included in the CDC’s 2015 information and recommendations.

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.

The Claremont Colleges, in an effort to keep the campus safe and as healthy as possible, now require all incoming freshmen to show proof of meningococcal vaccination. The vaccine is available at Student Health Services any day by appointment. For more information, please feel free to contact our health service and/or consult the student’s health care provider. You can also find information about this disease on our web site, www.cuc.claremont.edu/shs/, which links to the web site for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), http://www.cdc.gov/, and the American College Health Association web site, www.acha.org/Topics/meningitis.cfm.