Meningococcal Disease

What is meningococcal disease?
- Meningococcal disease is any illness caused by the bacteria Neisseria meningitidis.
- It is the leading cause of bacterial meningitis in children 2-18 years of age in U.S.
- Meningococcal disease can be very serious, even life-threatening in 48 hours or less.
- The two most severe and common illnesses caused by meningococcal bacteria include:
  - Meningitis - an infection of the fluid and lining around the brain and spinal cord
  - Septicemia - a bloodstream infection

What are the symptoms?
- Symptoms of meningococcal disease are similar to influenza (flu) and may include:
  - Sudden onset of a high fever
  - Headache
  - Stiff neck
  - Nausea
  - Vomiting
  - Increased sensitivity to light
  - Rash
  - Confusion
  - Severe aches and pain in the muscles, joints, chest or belly

How does meningococcal disease spread?
- Meningococcal disease is spread person to person by sharing respiratory secretions, through kissing or coughing, close or lengthy contact, and among people who share a room or live in the same household.
- Anyone can get meningococcal disease, but teens and college freshmen who live in residence halls are at increased risk.
- Some people can “carry” meningococcal bacteria in their nose and throat without getting meningococcal disease, but can still infect other people.
- Most cases of meningococcal disease are spread by people who “carry” the bacteria with no symptoms, appear to be random, and not linked to other cases.
- Meningococcal outbreaks can occur in communities, schools, colleges, prisons, and in other high risk populations.

Where can I find more information?
- Ask your doctor.
- Call the Alabama Department of Public Health, Immunization Division, at 1-800-469-4599.
- Go to cdc.gov and type meningococcal disease in SEARCH box.