

## Menin-what? Make sure your teen knows about meningitis.

### Encourage Healthy Habits

There are a lot of little things your teen can do every day to help prevent meningitis. Here are just a few healthy habits that can help:

- Meningococcal bacteria can enter the body through the nose and mouth, so teens should avoid sharing glasses, eating utensils—anything that someone has put in or near their mouth.<sup>1,2</sup>
- Get enough sleep and take a break from stress. Being tired and stressed out can weaken the immune system, which may make a teen more prone to meningitis.<sup>1,3,4</sup>
- Studies have shown that smoking or being around secondhand smoke can increase a teen's chances of catching meningitis.<sup>1,2,5</sup>

### Know the Symptoms of Meningitis

You and your teen should know the red flags for meningitis. A teen with meningococcal disease may have some or all of the following symptoms, but maybe not at the same time:<sup>1,2</sup>

- Severe headaches
- Painfully stiff neck
- Numbness in hands and feet
- Confusion
- Seizures
- High fever
- Nausea and vomiting
- Light sensitivity
- Rash

If you notice any of these symptoms, call your child's doctor right away. It's also important for your teen to recognize these symptoms and tell you or the school nurse immediately.

[voicesofmeningitis.org](http://voicesofmeningitis.org)

#### References:

1. National Meningitis Association. About meningitis. [http://www.nmaus.org/about\\_meningitis/index.htm](http://www.nmaus.org/about_meningitis/index.htm). Accessed May 14, 2009.
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4. Carpenter S. Sleep deprivation may be undermining teen health. American Psychological Association Web site. <http://www.apa.org/monitor/oct01/sleepteen.html>. Accessed May 14, 2009.
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