DID YOU KNOW?
- 310 cases of meningococcal disease were reported in the United States in 2017.
- Meningococcal disease is also seasonal: the number of cases generally peaks each year in December and January.

WHAT IS MENINGOCOCCAL MENINGITIS?
Meningococcal Meningitis is a rare but potentially fatal bacterial infection. It can occur in two forms – as either meningococcal meningitis, an inflammation that affects the brain and spinal cord, or as meningococcemia, the presence of bacteria in the blood. Permanent brain damage, hearing loss, learning disability, limb amputation, kidney failure, or death can result from the infection.

WHAT CAUSES MENINGOCOCCAL MENINGITIS?
This infectious disease is caused by the bacterium Neisseria meningitidis, a leading cause of bacterial meningitis in older children and young adults in the U.S.

EARLY SYMPTOMS OF MENINGITIS
✓ high fever
✓ neck stiffness
✓ chills
✓ vomiting
✓ altered mental state
✓ headache
✓ rash
✓ sensitivity to light
✓ irritability
✓ and/or lethargy

- Meningitis usually peaks in late winter and early spring, overlapping flu season; and symptoms can easily be mistaken for the flu.
- Because the infection progresses quickly, students should seek medical care immediately if two or more of these symptoms occur at one time.
- If untreated, meningitis can lead to shock and death within hours of the first symptoms.

WHO IS AT RISK FOR MENINGITIS?
Meningitis can strike at any age; however, certain groups have a greater risk for contracting the disease:
- College students who live in residence halls or communal living arrangements.
- Anyone in close contact with a known case.
- Anyone with an upper respiratory infection with a compromised immune system.
- Anyone traveling to endemic areas of the world where meningitis is prevalent.

HOW IS MENINGITIS TRANSMITTED?
- Meningitis bacteria is contagious, but generally is transmitted through direct exchange of respiratory and throat secretions by close personal contact, such as coughing, sharing drinks, kissing and being in close proximity for an extended period.
- Meningitis bacteria are not as contagious as the common cold or the flu and it is not spread by casual contact or by simply breathing the air where a person with meningitis has been.

IS THERE A VACCINE TO HELP PREVENT MENINGITIS?
- A safe, effective vaccine is available.
- One vaccine is 85 to 100% effective in preventing four kinds of bacteria (serogroups A, C, Y, W-135) that cause about 70% of disease in the U.S. The other is the serogroup B meningococcal vaccine.

URI Health Services is available for any questions or concerns by calling 401-874-2246.

Additional information regarding meningitis and college students is available at the following web sites:
http://www.cdc.gov/meningitis/index.html