



## NEWS RELEASE

### ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

RSA Tower 201 Monroe Street, Suite 914 Montgomery, AL 36104

Phone 334-206-5300 Fax 334-206-5534

[www.adph.org](http://www.adph.org)

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## College freshmen encouraged to receive meningococcal vaccine

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

#### CONTACT:

Winkler Sims

(334) 206-5023

The Alabama Department of Public Health encourages incoming college freshmen who plan to live in dormitories to be vaccinated with meningococcal vaccine. College freshmen who live in dormitories are at higher risk for meningococcal disease compared to other people of the same age.

Dr. Donald Williamson, state health officer, said, "All matriculating freshmen who will be residing in dormitories should consider being vaccinated. The vaccine is safe and immunogenic, and therefore can be provided to all other college students who want to reduce their risk for meningococcal disease."

Meningococcal disease is caused by bacteria that infect the bloodstream and the linings of the brain and spinal cord, causing serious illness. Every year in the United States, 1,400 to 2,800 people get meningococcal disease. Ten to 14 percent of people with meningococcal disease die, and 11 to 19 percent of survivors have permanent disabilities (such as mental retardation, hearing loss and loss of limbs).

The disease often begins with symptoms that can be mistaken for common illnesses, such as the flu. Meningococcal disease is particularly dangerous because it can progress rapidly and kill within hours.

The risk for meningococcal disease among non-freshmen college students is similar to that for the general population of similar age (18-24 years). College students should contact their health care provider about the availability of meningococcal vaccine.

For more information contact the Immunization Division, Alabama Department of Public Health, at (334) 206-5023 or visit [www.adph.org/immunization](http://www.adph.org/immunization).