



# THE COLLEGE PARENT



## Mothers Of College Students Warn About Potentially Deadly Meningitis

(NAPSA)—A number of parents are getting together to protect the college-age children of others. One of them is Lynn Bozof. She says her son Evan did not have to die. She made sure he had every vaccine necessary before he started college, but no one told her about the vaccine to prevent meningococcal meningitis. If she had known, Evan would have received that vaccine, too.

“Please talk to your doctor about vaccination against meningococcal meningitis for your college-age child and make sure he or she gets immunized before heading off to school,” she said.

Bozof is one of five mothers with tragic, personal stories to share about the devastating effects of meningococcal disease among college students. These women have teamed up as the “Mom’s On Meningitis” (M.O.M.s), a new coalition working in conjunction with the Meningitis Foundation of America (MFA), a national non-profit organization that promotes awareness about meningitis and vaccination.

“We want to urge all college students and parents to learn about this disease and the vaccine available to help protect against it,” said Deb Kepferle, one of the M.O.M.s who lost her 18-year-old son Patrick to this disease during his freshman year at college.

Studies show some college students, especially freshmen living in dormitories, are at increased risk of meningococcal meningitis, a potentially fatal bacterial infection. Certain college lifestyle factors appear to increase the risk of



**Mothers whose college-age children have suffered or died from meningococcal meningitis increase awareness about this potentially fatal disease.**

disease, including communal living such as dormitories, bar patronage and smoking.

Recommendations issued by health officials and pediatricians stress that college students and parents should learn about meningococcal disease and the benefits of vaccination.

Other M.O.M.s who wish their children had been vaccinated, include Candie Benn, whose freshman daughter Melanie survived the disease but had to have her arms and legs amputated to save her life. The disease killed Judy Miller’s daughter, Beth, during her sophomore year. Paige Kach’s son, John, survived the disease, but doctors had to amputate one of his legs below the knee and remove his fingers and remaining toes.

### **Meningococcal Meningitis— A Potentially Fatal Disease**

Meningococcal meningitis is a bacterial infection that spreads through respiratory secretions and direct contact with an infected per-

son, such as kissing or sharing glasses and utensils. It strikes most often in late winter and early spring—a time when college classes are in session. The disease strikes nearly 3,000 Americans each year.

Symptoms, which can easily be misdiagnosed as the flu, include high fever, headache, stiff neck, confusion, nausea, vomiting, exhaustion and rash. Without prompt treatment, it can progress quickly, resulting in serious or fatal consequences, including hearing loss, brain damage, limb amputations or death.

### **Vaccination—Protect Your College-Age Child**

Studies show that up to 80 percent of the cases that occur on college campuses are vaccine-preventable. The vaccine, which is highly effective against the most common strains of the bacteria that cause meningococcal meningitis, provides protection against four types of the bacteria that cause the majority of the cases of meningococcal meningitis among college students. As with all vaccines, there can be minor reactions, including pain and redness at the injection site or a mild fever. The vaccine is not recommended during pregnancy or if the individual has a compromised immune system or certain health conditions.

The vaccine is often available from your family doctor or college health center, and should be obtained during your child’s pre-college physical examination.

For more information, visit MFA’s Web site at [www.musa.org](http://www.musa.org) or call its information line at 1-866-321-4MFA.