**MENINGITIS- A Potentially Fatal Sickness for Young Athletes**

 Meningitis B is a serious neurologic disease that can attack the brain’s inner cellular lining as well as

the spinal cord; leading to serious infection of the blood (sepsis) , brain swelling, and damage to the

spinal cord. Meningitis B is caused by the bacteria, Neisseria meningitides. Approximately 10% of those

young women and men infected with Meningitis B will die, and of those survivors more than 20% will

encounter long term brain or spinal cord damage, kidney damage, loss of one limb, and / or permanent

skin scars. Meningitis B is contagious, and may be passed along by drinking utensils, coughing, sneezing,

and exposure to crowded areas such as dormitories, cafeterias, and locker rooms. Symptoms of

meningitis B include severe headache, neck stiffness, nausea, photosensitivity, rapid breathing, muscle

and joint aches, shivering, and confusion. If you, a friend, or relative has any of the above symptoms,

please urge them to seek medical treatment immediately. Early recognition of meningitis, usually

coupled with a spinal tap or lumbar puncture in the Emergency Department, leads to timely

administration of antibiotics that can definitively stop the deadly progression of meningitis B.

Furthermore, please encourage your peers to undergo vaccination and to have their children receive the

meningitis vaccination at the age of 11 – 12 years and again at the age of 16 – 18 years. Prophylactic

meningitis B vaccinations will save hundreds of young lives in the United States.

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