College is an exciting time, when students meet and interact with new people from all over, but you should know that close-quartered living, such as living in dorms, could put college students at an increased risk of contracting uncommon but potentially deadly meningococcal group B disease (also known as MenB). Since the incidence of MenB peaks at 19 years of age among teens and young adults, it is important that they understand the risks, signs, and symptoms of this disease, and talk to their health care professional about getting vaccinated.

Typical teen and young adult behaviors—such as living in dorms, group hangouts, sharing drinks, utensils, smoking cigarettes, and kissing—can promote the spread of the bacteria that cause the disease.

College students have a 3.5 times greater risk of contracting MenB than those who don’t attend college. From 2011 to 2016, MenB has been responsible for all US college outbreaks of meningococcal disease.

Early symptoms may seem like the flu, but MenB can lead to death in just 24 hours, or for survivors, permanent disabilities.

On average, 1 in 10 teens and young adults who develop MenB will die from it.

Until 2014, available vaccines only helped protect against 4 of the 5 most common types of bacteria—groups A, C, W, and Y, but not B—that cause meningococcal disease. Vaccines are now available for MenB.

To hear personal stories of those affected by meningococcal disease, go to MeetMeningitis.com/videos.