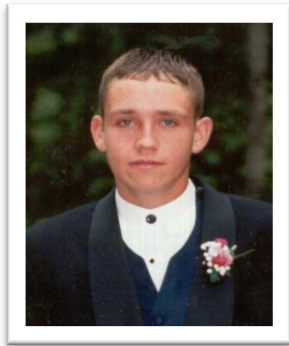


2011 Immunization Issue Brief

Faces of Vaccine-Preventable Diseases: Meningitis

February 8, 2011



This is Ryan Milley. Ryan had just graduated from high school and was about to start college. However, on Father's Day he became ill and, upon being rushed to the emergency room, was diagnosed with meningitis, a vaccine-preventable disease. He died less than 24 hours later.

Meningitis is a potentially fatal infection that infects approximately 3,000 Americans annually. The disease is most common in children under one year of age and in people with certain medical conditions. However, in recent years the proportion of cases of meningitis in adolescents and young adults has increased. The rate of invasive meningitis among people age 17–20 years is about twice that of the general U.S. population. Meningitis attacks the infected individual quickly and has severe complications, including hearing loss, brain damage, limb amputations and, in many cases, death.

However, meningitis is a vaccine-preventable disease. Today's meningococcal vaccine protects against four out of five subtypes of meningococcus. To protect adolescents from this disease, the meningococcal vaccine is recommended for those ages 11-12 and a booster dose at age 16. Such recommendations help to protect West Virginia's adolescents from dangerous and potentially deadly diseases, like meningitis, by increasing and sustaining immunization rates.

For more information, please contact:

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