

## Jessica Elkins

Jessica Elkins was a healthy, fifteen-year old living in Athens, Alabama in November of 2007. She was a JV cheerleader and loved spending time with her friends and family. On December 21, after taking her final math exam, Jessica appeared fine. Right after lunch she began feeling sick and was taken to the local doctor. They diagnosed her with the flu and sent her home. The next day, her mother saw that she had tiny bruises all over her body. They rushed her to Decatur General Hospital where she was diagnosed with meningitis and then was medflighted to Birmingham Children's Hospital. The doctor was very honest and told us that many children die from this, but because we got her there so fast she had a better chance. While there her stats would improve and then drastically fall. On December 26th, the nursed checked her eyes and ran to get the doctor. Her brain was dead. Jessica passed away on December 26, 2007. PLEASE get your child vaccinated. No parent or family wants to go through a tragedy like this.



**Our mission is to save lives.  
Please tell your friends!**

- Google "Jessica Elkins" to read more about her story.
- Visit National Meningitis Association ([www.nmaus.org](http://www.nmaus.org))
- Visit Meningitis Angels online to read other victims' stories. ([www.meningitis-angels.org](http://www.meningitis-angels.org))

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*The disease that kills before you  
know you have it.*

## Meningitis Awareness



Jessica Michelle Elkins  
September 23, 1992—December 26, 2007

# Meningitis: The Disease



\* Meningitis is an inflammation of the meninges, the membranes that cover the brain and spinal cord. It is usually caused by certain medications or illnesses. Bacterial meningitis is rare, but is usually serious and can be life-threatening if it's not treated right away. Viral meningitis is relatively common and far less serious. It often goes undiagnosed because its symptoms are a lot like the common flu. Kids of any age can get meningitis, but because it can be easily spread between people living in close quarters, teens, college students and boarding-students are at higher risk. Each year, meningococcal disease strikes nearly 3,000 Americans, and 10 to 12 percent of those will die. Up to 20 percent of survivors have long-term disabilities, such as a brain damage, hearing loss, or limb amputations.



\* Sources: [www.kidshealth.org](http://www.kidshealth.org)

The National Meningitis Association, Inc.

## Symptoms

\*The symptoms of meningitis vary and depend both on the age of the child and on the cause of the infection. Because the flu-like symptoms can be similar in both types of meningitis, particularly in the early stages, and bacterial meningitis can be very serious, it's important to quickly diagnose an infection. Warning signs in infants include: high pitch moaning, dislike of being held, fretting, lethargic, refusing food, vomiting, difficult to wake, high temperatures, purplish rash, and blank stare. Warning signs for adults and children include: headaches, drowsiness, disorientation, dislike of light, seizures, high temperatures, joint pain, stiff neck, and purplish rash. Some, none, or all of these symptoms may present themselves. Once the infection starts, it can spread rapidly through the body!

## Prevention

Immunization can prevent the majority of meningococcal disease cases in adolescents and young adults. Vaccination protects against four of the five major strains of the bacteria responsible for meningococcal disease in the U.S. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends meningococcal immunization (one shot) for all adolescents 11 through 18 of age. Others who wish to be immunized should speak to their health care provider. Vaccination offers the best protection against the disease.

## Find Out More

\* For more information about meningococcal disease and immunization, visit these websites:

**National Meningitis Association**

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

**American Academy of Family Physicians**

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

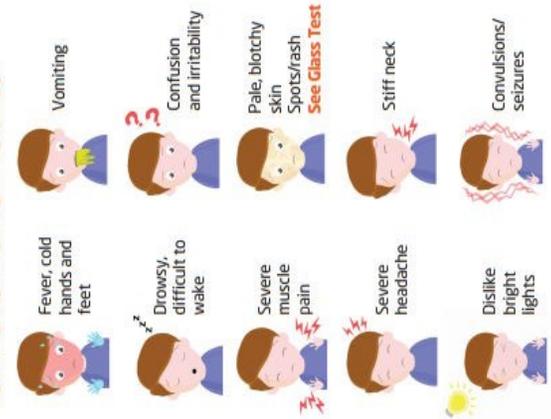
**Centers for Disease Control and Prevention**

[www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)

**National Foundation of Infectious Diseases**

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

## Children and Adults



## Be aware

Meningitis and septicaemia often happen together. Be aware of all the signs and symptoms.

Symptoms can appear in any order. Some may not appear at all.

Early symptoms can include:

fever headache vomiting

muscle pain

fever with cold hands and feet

Someone with meningitis or septicaemia can get a lot worse very quickly. Keep checking them.

Trust your instincts - get medical help immediately

## Babies and Toddlers

