

# Have You Heard?

*[Announcer] This podcast is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. CDC – safer, healthier people.*

[Music] Oh yeah, said ready to go now. Uh-huh, I said ready to go now. Oh oh, everything's going to be all right. Gonna be all right. Gonna be all right...

[Mom] What is the letter from your school? Were you supposed to give this to me?

[Daughter] Mom, this is important.

[Mom] Hey, no more texting till you're done with your homework.

[Daughter] You're not going to believe this, but I was just hearing about it. Remember Evan from my class? He has meningitis, whatever that is.

[Mom] You know what, you were supposed to give this to me, and we're supposed to watch the news at 5:30 to get more information. What are you doing?

[Daughter] Can I at least text Emily to remind her to turn to channel 3?

[Mom] Hurry up. This is important. It is 5:30 now.

[News Anchor] Our top story, a Springfield middle school student has been hospitalized with a case of meningococcal meningitis. The student is being treated for this serious infection and is in the intensive care unit at Springfield Hospital. Joining us now with more information on this serious issue is Dr. Amanda Cohn, a specialist in meningitis, a board certified pediatrician, and researcher at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta, Georgia, the CDC. Dr. Cohn, thank you for being here.

[Dr. Cohn] Thank you for having me. I'd also like to add that I have three children myself, so I completely understand how nerve wracking it can be to have a case of meningitis in your community.

[News Anchor] Let me start off by asking you to help us understand, what is meningitis?

[Dr. Cohn] Meningitis is inflammation of the protective covering of your brain and spinal cord; it's often caused by viruses or bacteria. The type of meningitis that the student in this case has is meningococcal meningitis which is a very serious type of meningitis and can even be fatal.

[News Anchor] Well, what signs and symptoms should parents be on the lookout for? How quickly do they develop?

[Dr. Cohn] Typical signs and symptoms in children and teenagers include high fever, headache, stiff neck. These symptoms can progress very rapidly, in just one to two days. Other signs and

symptoms include small, dark spots on your arms and legs, confusion, nausea, vomiting, and difficulty looking into bright lights.

[News Anchor] That sounds serious. What should parents do?

[Dr. Cohn] It is very serious. At the first sign of any of these symptoms, parents should take their child to the doctor right away. This infection is treatable with antibiotics, and most children do recover. However, up to one quarter of kids either die or have serious long term consequences, such as losing a limb or having problems hearing.

[News Anchor] Is there any way to prevent this?

[Dr. Cohn] Yes, this type of meningitis can be prevented. There's a vaccine that doctors recommend kids get at their 11 to 12 year old annual checkup. It's a safe vaccine, and it protects against meningococcal meningitis, which is the type of infection this boy has.

[News Anchor] This hits home a little bit with me. My daughter's going to college this fall, and she's never gotten a meningitis vaccine. Is there something we can do?

[Dr. Cohn] Absolutely. For the kids who missed the vaccine during their 11 to 12 year old visit, it's definitely not too late to get vaccinated, especially right before going to college.

[News Anchor] Well, our thoughts go out to the family right now. The Springfield Middle School and Health Department are urging families to speak to their doctor, nurse, or clinic about getting vaccinated. Dr. Cohn, anything else to add?

[Dr. Cohn] I'd like to add that older children and teenagers need regular checkups too, so this is a good opportunity to call your doctor, schedule an appointment, and get this vaccine and other vaccines that are recommended for your preteen or teenager.

[News Anchor] Thank you, Dr. Cohn for being with us.

[Dr. Cohn] Thank you for having me.

[News Anchor] In other news, the Springfield Police Department...

[Daughter] I'm convinced. You know I don't like shots, but it seems like we've got to do this.

[Mom] Well, you'll be thrilled to hear that Dr. Simon has Saturday hours for vaccinating.

[Daughter] You know I have soccer practice on Saturday afternoon!

[Mom] Well, I guess we'll just have to make it an early appointment to get vaccinated won't we?

[Music] Oh yeah, said ready to go now. Uh-huh, I said ready to go now. Oh oh, everything's gonna be all right.

*[Announcer] For the most accurate health information, visit [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov) or call 1-800-CDC-INFO, 24/7.*