

Gabriel Zdircu
305-642-9889
gabriel@passporthealthmiami.com

First Annual World Meningitis Day Gaining National Support

World Meningitis Day is April 25, 2009

MIAMI, FL - 4/21/09- The first annual World Meningitis Day begins April 25, 2009 and is gaining national support. The day is meant to raise awareness and educate Americans about the dangers of contracting the Meningococcal disease. “We recognize the dangers of meningitis and the importance of being vaccinated against the disease,” said Fran Lessans, CEO of Passport Health, the largest provider of travel medical services and immunizations in the U.S. “Passport Health wants to honor this day and show its support by offering to vaccinate and educate Americans about the disease.”

Travel season is quickly approaching and travelers should be aware that many popular travel destinations are in countries where meningitis is endemic. International travel and migration facilitate the rapid intercontinental spread of meningococcal disease, according to The Journal of Travel Medicine. “The disease is endemic in the meningococcal belt which runs through sub-Saharan Africa,” added Claudie Boulay, RN, Executive Director at Passport Health Miami. “This area stretches from Senegal to Ethiopia across the middle of the continent.”

The meningitis vaccine is especially recommended, if not required, for the following people: students attending college/universities, students studying abroad, travelers, camp attendees, humanitarian workers, missionary workers, and volunteer abroad workers.

According to the WHO, there is an estimated total population of 300 million people living in along this belt. You can find more information related to the meningococcal belt in Passport Health’s “[country of the month](#)” blog. In honor of Meningitis Day, the daily blog will focus on meningitis and how it can affect travelers.

Meningitis is a serious disease that affects the brain and spinal cord. According to the CDC, approximately 20% of those infected have long term consequences and between 10%-12% die from the disease each year. The United States has nearly 3,000 cases of the disease every year. The disease is transferred through respiratory secretions and the spread of the disease is facilitated through prolonged contact. Be aware that meningitis can be contracted by people of all ages, not just college-bound students.

For more information about meningitis or Passport Health Miami, visit <http://www.passporthealthmiami.com/Meningococcal.html> or call 305-642-9889 to make an appointment, or inquire about an on-site clinic.

###