

107TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. CON. RES. 340

CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

Supporting the goals and ideals of Meningitis
Awareness Month.

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Whereas meningitis is usually caused by a viral or bacterial infection;

Whereas viral meningitis is generally less severe than bacterial meningitis;

Whereas bacterial meningitis caused by the meningococcus, *Neisseria meningitidis*, is one of the most deadly and least understood infections in the United States;

Whereas in 2000 more than 2,900 people in the United States developed meningococcal disease;

Whereas the 2 most common types of meningococcal disease are meningitis, an infection of the fluid that surrounds the spinal cord and the brain, the symptoms of which include high fever, headache, stiff neck, confusion, lethargy, vomiting, and seizures, and meningococemia, an infection of the blood stream, the symptoms of which include a red-brown rash or purple blotches;

Whereas although meningococcal disease can be treated with a number of effective antibiotics, such treatment must begin early in the course of the disease, because the disease can be fatal within hours after the first symptoms appear;

Whereas individuals who survive meningococcal meningitis can suffer from debilitating effects such as hearing and vision loss, learning difficulties or mental retardation, loss of arms and legs, and paralysis;

Whereas between 20 percent and 25 percent of all people carry the bacterium that causes meningococcal disease in the back of their noses and throats without developing the disease, but can pass the bacterium to others;

Whereas the bacterium that causes meningococcal disease can be passed by close contact that involves the exchange of respiratory or throat secretions with someone who is infected or is carrying the bacterium, including coughing, kissing, and sharing items such as cigarettes, lipsticks, foods, drinks, toothbrushes, and mouth guards;

Whereas meningococcal disease cannot be spread merely by being in the same room with an infected person or by breathing the air where an infected person has been;

Whereas meningococcal disease usually develops within 1 to 14 days after exposure;

Whereas although the occurrence of meningococcal disease was once highest among children between the ages of 6 months and 36 months, the occurrence of the disease among older children and adolescents has been increasing in recent years, with a number of outbreaks occurring at schools and universities;

Whereas although a vaccine is currently available which provides protection against 4 of the 5 common strains of meningococcal disease in the United States, vaccinations are rarely administered until after an outbreak occurs;

Whereas the medical community should be encouraged to make a routine practice of informing adolescent patients and their parents about the option of being vaccinated against this debilitating and often deadly disease; and

Whereas the Meningitis Awareness Key to prevention (MAK) organization has requested that Congress designate April as Meningitis Awareness Month in order to raise public awareness about meningitis and the availability of effective vaccines against meningococcal disease: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate*
2 *concurring)*, That Congress supports the goals and ideals
3 of Meningitis Awareness Month.

Passed the House of Representatives June 17, 2002.

Attest:

Clerk.