

**Susan Israels**

**Yuma, Arizona**

**Mother of Amanda, Who Survived Meningococcal Disease**

Susan Israels had learned about the dangers of meningococcal disease and the availability of a vaccine to prevent it while preparing her two youngest daughters for college; however she wasn't aware, at that time, that her oldest daughter, 26-year-old Amanda, was also at risk.

In 2005, Amanda went out with friends to celebrate New Year's Eve. Susan and her two younger daughters stayed home to watch Amanda's one year old daughter, Jennah. A few hours after going out, Amanda called home and complained of being dizzy and nauseous. Realizing she wasn't feeling well, Amanda's friends quickly agreed to take her home to rest.

The next morning, after a restless night, Amanda woke her mother and asked to be taken to the hospital. Although her flu-like symptoms had passed, she had what appeared to be an extremely painful bruise on the bottom of her foot. Upon arrival at the emergency room, the attending doctor noticed a purple rash quickly appearing on her arms, face and upper thighs. The physician immediately suspected meningococcal disease, a rare, yet potentially deadly bacterial infection, and acted quickly ordering antibiotics and taking necessary steps to try to lower her blood pressure. Tests indicated Amanda had contracted meningococemia, a form of bacterial meningitis that infects the blood. Amanda was immediately admitted into the intensive care unit of the hospital.

Six days after being admitted, Amanda was flown to the Arizona Burn Center in Phoenix where doctors had to amputate both her feet, all of the fingers on her left hand and all the fingertips on her right hand in order to save her life. She also received skin grafts on both arms and legs to repair damage done by the disease.

Susan and her family feel quite fortunate that Amanda survived and are reminded daily of the devastating and disabling effects of this disease. They are extremely grateful to the doctor whose quick action undoubtedly saved her life.

“When I first heard about meningococcal disease and the vaccine, I was only concerned for my two younger daughters who would be attending college in the near future,” said Susan. “I never thought that Amanda was also at risk of contracting this disease and, if she had been immunized, she probably wouldn't have gotten sick.”

Susan joined the National Meningitis Association's “Moms on Meningitis” program to help educate other families in Yuma about the dangers of meningococcal disease and prevention methods, including immunization.

A vaccine to help prevent meningococcal disease is approved for use by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration among persons aged 2 to 55 years. The vaccine protects against four of the major strains of the disease.

Anyone can get meningococcal disease, but adolescents and young adults are increased risk for contracting the disease. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends meningococcal immunization for all adolescents 11 through 18 years of age, and college freshmen living in dormitories.

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