My name is Patsy Schanbaum, I was preparing to have my daughter Jamie come home from her first semester at college when the hospital called. It was the call every parent fears. Jamie was in the hospital and I needed to get there immediately. By the time I got there, she was already in a medically-induced coma and fighting to survive.

In 24 hours, my daughter went from a healthy college student to fighting for her life after contracting meningococcal disease. To help stop the spread of the disease and to save Jamie’s life, doctors had to amputate both of her legs below the knee and all her fingers. Telling the doctors to amputate Jamie’s limbs was one of the hardest decisions I’ve ever had to make, but it needed to be done to save her life.

Meningococcal disease, known as meningitis, is an uncommon, but serious illness that can cause life-threatening complications, or even death. Symptoms include sudden high fever, severe headache, body aches and chills, stiff neck and a dark purple rash (typically on the torso, arms or legs). Up to one in five who contract meningitis will suffer long-term consequences, like Jamie.

I was thankfully able to support my daughter Jamie through her long recovery from meningitis. Just a year after learning to walk again, Jamie was back on her bike, and it was soon after that, that I was able to be there when she received a gold medal for her cycling. I was so proud of her; I wish the whole world had been there to see her in that moment.

I learned it is important to “Ask2BSure” when it comes to my child’s health. After Jamie’s experience, I am committed to educating others about meningitis symptoms, risks and the importance of vaccination. I am grateful my daughter survived meningitis, but others may not be as lucky as Jamie. As parents, it is our responsibility to educate ourselves about meningitis and more important than ever that we speak with our children’s doctors about the two different types of vaccinations that can help protect them from meningococcal disease — one for groups A, C, W, and Y and another for group B.

Patsy Schanbaum is a Ask2Bsure advocate. This is one person’s experience; other people’s experience with meningitis may be different.