

Meningococcal Disease

Dear Parents/Guardians/Students,

As of July 1, 2005 schools are required to provide meningococcal information beginning with sixth grade entry to students and parents in our community. Meningococcal disease, commonly known as meningococcal meningitis, strikes up to 3,000 adolescents and adults in the U.S., each year. Adolescents and young adults have an increased rate of contracting meningococcal disease compared to the general population, accounting for nearly 30 percent of all U.S. cases annually. According to one study, as many as one out of every four adolescents infected with the disease may die. Of those who survive, up to 20 percent suffer long-term disabilities, including brain damage, hearing loss, kidney disease and limb amputations.

The Department of Health wants you to be aware of meningococcal meningitis and the availability of a vaccine to protect against the disease. Vaccination can help protect against up to 83 percent of the meningococcal disease cases occurring among adolescents and young adults. Vaccination is not required for school attendance.

We encourage you to learn more about meningococcal meningitis and prevention and speak to your child's physician about immunization. In addition, we urge you to speak to your children about good hygiene and not sharing personal items that may help transmit the disease.

There is additional information available on the following web sites:

- Washington State Department of Health Immunization Program:

Meningococcal disease information:

<http://www.doh.wa.gov/cfh/Immunize/meningococcal.htm>

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:

Meningococcal vaccine information:

<http://www.cdc.gov/nip/publications/vis/vis-mening.pdf>

Disease Information:

http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dbmd/diseaseinfo/meningococcal_g.htm

Fact sheets: http://www.cdc.gov/nip/vaccine/mening/mening_fs.pdf

- Children's Hospital of Philadelphia Vaccine Education Center

http://www.chop.edu/vaccine/images/vec_mening_tear.pdf

- National Meningitis Association - <http://www.nmaus.org/programs/pta/index.htm>

Sincerely,

Bonnie Barthelme, RN MN