

Dr. Steve Rasmussen, Superintendent

Dear Parent or Guardian:

As of July 2005, schools in Washington are required to make information available on Meningococcal diseases to parents or guardians of all students entering Grades 6-12.

Meningococcal Disease and Prevention

Meningococcal Disease

Meningococcal disease spreads by direct contact with infected persons by coughing, kissing, or sharing anything by mouth, such as water bottles, eating utensils, lipsticks, or toothbrushes. It can cause pneumonia, bloodstream infection, and meningitis (swelling of the covering of the brain and spinal cord). Severe disease can cause brain damage, loss of hearing or limbs, and death. Fortunately, this life-threatening infection is rare – usually only about 30-60 cases are reported each year in Washington, including 1 to 8 deaths. Adolescents and young adults are more likely to get meningococcal disease, especially if they live in group settings, like college dorms.

Meningococcal Conjugate Vaccine (MCV4)

MCV4 protects your child against the most common types of bacteria that cause meningococcal disease. This vaccine and many others are available at no cost to patients younger than 19 years of age in Washington State. Healthy teens should get one dose of MCV4 during a pre-teen health check up at age 11 thru 12 years. Teens who did not get their first dose during the pre-teen health visit should get a dose at the earliest opportunity. A second dose, often called a booster dose, is now recommended. Teens should get it at age 16 thru 18 years or anytime before college. Teens don't need a booster dose if they got the first dose on or after the 16th birthday. Teens aged 11 thru 18 years with high risk conditions like HIV, absent or defective spleens, and complement component deficiency may need more doses of this vaccine. Ask your healthcare provider how many doses your adolescent needs for a full protection.

Learn More

Learn more about meningococcal disease and how to prevent it on the following Web sites:

Washington State Profile

Meningococcal information:

<http://www.doh.wa.gov/cfh/immunize/vaccine/meningococcal/default.htm>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Meningococcal vaccine information:

www.cdc.gov/vaccines/pubs/vis/downloads/vis-mening.pdf

Disease information:

www.cdc.gov/meningitis/about/fag.html

Pre-teen immunizations:

www.cdc.gov/vaccines/spec-grps/preteens-adol.htm

College students & young adults:

www.cdc.gov/vaccines/spec-grps/college.htm

Children's Hospital of Philadelphia Vaccine Education Center

Meningococcus questions & answers:
www.chop.edu/export/download/pdfs/articles/vaccine-education-center/meningococcus.pdf

www.chop.edu/export/download/pdfs/articles/vaccine-education-center/meningococcus.pdf

National Meningitis Association

www.nmaus.org