

August 12, 2008

Dear Parent/Guardians:

As of July 1, 2005 schools are required to provide meningococcal information 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.

Signs of the disease are high fever, headache, and stiff neck. Other symptoms may include nausea, vomiting, discomfort looking into bright lights, confusion, and sleepiness. As the disease progresses, seizures may occur.

The disease is spread by the exchange of respiratory and throat secretions (i.e., coughing, kissing).

A vaccine is available but is not required for school attendance. The Centers for Disease Control recommends the following groups consider getting the vaccine:

- all children at their routine preadolescent visit (11 to 12 years of age)
- or at high school entry
- college freshmen living in dormitories

Speak to your child's physician to decide if this would be a good idea for your child.

Website resources:

- 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,

Laura Brumfield, RN
School Nurse Corps
North Central Education Service District