



Dear Parent or Guardian:

As of July 2005 schools in Washington are required to provide information on meningococcal disease to parents or guardians of all students entering grades 6-12.

Meningococcal disease is a serious infection of the brain (meningitis) and blood caused by a bacteria. Fortunately, this life-threatening infection is rare -- only about 75 people are infected each year in Washington. Adolescents and young adults are most likely to get meningococcal disease, especially those living in group settings such as college dorms.

The Department of Health wants you to be aware of meningococcal disease and how you can protect your child against it. A vaccine is available that can prevent up to 65 percent of meningococcal disease among adolescents and young adults. The vaccine is recommended for all children 11-12 years. It is also recommended for unvaccinated teens age 15 years and college freshmen who will be living in a dorm. The meningococcal vaccine is not required for school or college attendance.

Here are some other ways to prevent the spread of meningococcal disease:

- Practice good hygiene (regular hand washing, covering coughs and sneezes, etc.)
- Do not share items that may spread meningococcal disease and other bacteria and viruses, such as eating utensils, glasses, cups, water bottles, drinks, lip gloss or toothbrushes.

We encourage you to learn more about meningococcal disease and how to prevent it. More information on meningococcal disease is available on the following web sites:

- **Washington State Department of Health Immunization Program**
Meningococcal information: www.doh.wa.gov/cfh/immunize/meningococcal.htm
- **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention**
Meningococcal vaccine information: www.cdc.gov/nip/publications/vis/vis-mening.pdf
Disease Information: www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dbmd/diseaseinfo/meningococcal_g.htm
Fact sheets: www.cdc.gov/nip/vaccine/mening/mening_fs.pdf
- **Children's Hospital of Philadelphia Vaccine Education Center**
Meningococcal Questions & Answers: www.chop.edu/vaccine/images/vec_mening_tear.pdf
- **National Meningitis Association**
Parent & Teacher Awareness Program: www.nmaus.org/programs/pta/index.htm