

January, 2008

Dear Parent/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 dormitories.

The Department of Health wants you to be aware of meningococcal disease and how your child may prevent it. Talk to your children about good hygiene (regular hand washing, covering coughs and sneezes, etc.) and warn them not to share items that may spread meningococcal disease and other bacteria and viruses: eating utensils, glasses, cups, water bottles, drinks, lip gloss or toothbrushes.

A meningococcal vaccine is available that can prevent up to 65 percent of meningococcal disease among adolescents and young adults. Unfortunately, right now, the supply of this vaccine is limited and college freshmen who will be living in dorms have the highest priority for the limited vaccine supply. Talk with your child's doctor about the need for meningococcal vaccine for your child. Even if the meningococcal vaccine is recommended, it is not required for school or college attendance.

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](http://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](http://www.cdc.gov/nip/publications/vis/vis-mening.pdf)  
Disease Information: [www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dbmd/diseaseinfo/meningococcal\\_g.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dbmd/diseaseinfo/meningococcal_g.htm)  
Fact sheets: [www.cdc.gov/nip/vaccine/mening/mening\\_fs.pdf](http://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](http://www.chop.edu/vaccine/images/vec_mening_tear.pdf)
- **National Meningitis Association**  
Parent & Teacher Awareness Program: [www.nmaus.org/programs/pta/index.htm](http://www.nmaus.org/programs/pta/index.htm)

Sincerely,  
Nell Garvin, R.N. Bellevue School District Nurse Supervisor