

## Meningococcal Disease: Protect Your Child

According to section 118.07(3) of the Wisconsin State Statutes, Dodgeand School District is required to inform you about the dangers of meningococcal disease, commonly known as bacterial meningitis, a rare but potentially fatal infection that can occur among teenagers and college students. While meningococcal disease is rare and difficult to contract, it is very serious. There is now a vaccine that may help to prevent this infection.

Meningococcal bacteria can potentially be transmitted through close contact with an infected person through direct contact with respiratory and/or oral secretions from an infected person (for example, through sharing drinking containers or kissing). Teenagers and college students are at increased risk for meningococcal disease compared to the general population, accounting for nearly 30 percent of all U.S. cases every year. Meningococcal disease can be misdiagnosed as something less serious, because early symptoms like high fever, severe headache, nausea, vomiting and stiff neck, are similar to those of common viral illnesses. The disease can progress rapidly and can cause death or permanent disability within 48 hours of initial symptoms.

Up to 83 percent of all cases among teens and college students may potentially be prevented through immunization, the most effective way to prevent this disease. A meningococcal vaccine is available that protects against four out of five strains of bacterium that cause meningococcal disease in the U.S.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and other leading medical organizations recommend routine meningococcal immunization for adolescents during the preadolescent doctor's visit (11- to 12-year-olds), adolescents at high school entry (15-year-olds) if they have not previously been immunized, and for college freshmen living in dormitories. I suggest you contact your child's health care provider to help you decide if your child should receive this vaccination.

For more information about meningococcal disease and immunization, please contact Dodgeand's school nurse at 920-386-4404 - extension 1002 or visit the following websites to learn more about meningococcal disease, vaccine information, and public health resources visit the following web sites.

- [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov) – This CDC website includes the CDC recommendations and information on the meningococcal vaccine.
- [http://dhfs.wisconsin.gov/communicable/Communicable/factsheets/PDFfactsheets/Meningococcal\\_42072\\_05041.pdf](http://dhfs.wisconsin.gov/communicable/Communicable/factsheets/PDFfactsheets/Meningococcal_42072_05041.pdf) - The Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services communicable disease fact sheet.
- <http://dhfs.wisconsin.gov/communicable/Communicable/factsheets/Meningococcal.htm> - Another Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services communicable disease fact sheet.
- <http://dhfs.wisconsin.gov/LocalHealth/index.htm> - A list of local Wisconsin public health departments and contact information.
- American Academy of Family Physicians, [www.aafp.org](http://www.aafp.org)
- American Academy of Pediatrics, [www.aap.org](http://www.aap.org)
- Meningitis Foundation of America, [www.musa.org](http://www.musa.org)
- National Meningitis Association, [www.nmaus.org](http://www.nmaus.org)

## **Meningococcal Meningitis: Should Your child Be Immunized?**

Meningococcal disease is a dangerous bacterial infection that can strike teenagers and college students. The disease can progress rapidly and within hours of the first symptoms, may result in death or permanent disability, including brain damage, organ failure and loss of hearing. Research shows teenagers have an unusually high death rate; nearly one in four cases is fatal among this age group.

Symptoms of meningococcal disease often resemble the flu and can include a fever, headache, nausea and stiff neck, making the disease difficult to diagnose. That's why it's so important for parents to be aware of the disease and consider immunization for their teenagers and college-bound children.

The bacteria that cause meningococcal disease are transmitted through air droplets and by direct contact with an infected person (e.g., kissing, coughing). Due to lifestyle factors, such as crowded living situations (sleep-away camps, dorms), sharing personal items (e.g., utensils, drinking glasses), active or passive cigarette smoking and irregular sleep patterns, teenagers and college students are more likely to contract meningococcal disease than the general population. In fact, this age group accounts for nearly 30 percent of all cases in the U.S.

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- <http://dhfs.wisconsin.gov/communicable/Communicable/factsheets/Meningococcal.htm> - Another Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services communicable disease fact sheet.
- <http://dhfs.wisconsin.gov/LocalHealth/index.htm> - A list of local Wisconsin public health departments and contact information.
- American Academy of Family Physicians, [www.aafp.org](http://www.aafp.org)
- American Academy of Pediatrics, [www.aap.org](http://www.aap.org)
- Meningitis Foundation of America, [www.musa.org](http://www.musa.org)
- National Meningitis Association, [www.nmaus.org](http://www.nmaus.org)