



Meningococcal Disease: Protect Your Child

Public health authorities recommend that teenagers and college-bound students be immunized against a potentially fatal bacterial infection called meningococcal disease, a type of meningitis.

Meningococcal disease is a rare but potentially fatal bacterial infection that can cause severe swelling of the brain and spinal cord (meningitis) or a serious blood infection (meningococemia). Meningococcal disease strikes up to 3,000 Americans each year; nearly 30 percent of these cases are among teenagers and college students. 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 recommends that all 11-12 years olds should be vaccinated with meningococcal conjugate vaccine (MCV4). A booster shot is recommended for teens at age 16 to continue providing protection when their risk for meningococcal disease is highest. Teens who received MCV4 for the first time at age 13 through 15 years will need a one-time booster dose at 16 through 18 years of age. If a teenager missed getting the vaccine altogether, they should ask the doctor about getting it now, especially if they are about to move into a college dorm or military barracks.

Locally, the Kenosha County Division of Health (605-6700) is able to provide the vaccine. Fees are based on a sliding fee scale; minimum \$12.00 administration fee is requested at time of service. A copy of your child's immunization record is required. A parent must accompany minors. Parents may also contact their own health care providers for information regarding this service and Walgreen's along with other pharmacies provide the vaccine as well.

About Meningococcal Disease

Meningococcal disease is often misdiagnosed as something less serious because early symptoms are similar to common viral illnesses. Symptoms of meningococcal disease may include high fever, severe headache, stiff neck, nausea, vomiting, sensitivity to light, confusion, exhaustion and/or a rash.

Teenagers and college students are at increased risk for meningococcal disease compared to the general

those who survive, up to 20 percent may endure permanent disabilities, including brain damage, deafness and limb amputations.

Lifestyle factors common among teenagers, college students and military personnel are believed to put them at increased risk of contracting meningococcal disease. These lifestyle factors include crowded living situations (for example, dormitories, and sleep-away camps), active or passive smoking and irregular sleeping habits. Teens should avoid sharing eating utensils and drinking out of the same container, since infections may spread through this type of close contact.

To learn more about meningococcal disease, vaccine information, and public health resources visit the following web sites.

<http://www.cdc.gov/meningitis/index.html> – This CDC website includes the CDC recommendations and information on the meningococcal vaccine.

<http://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/communicable/factsheets/index.htm> -The Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services communicable disease fact Sheet

<http://dhs.wisconsin.gov/LocalHealth/index.htm> - A list of local Wisconsin public health departments and contact information.

American Academy of Family Physicians, www.aafp.org

American Academy of Pediatrics, www.aap.org

Meningitis Foundation of America, www.musa.org

National Meningitis Association, www.nmaus.org