

Meningococcal Immunization Information from the Nurse's Office

In reviewing student immunization records we have found that not all 11-12th grade students are up to date with their Meningococcal immunizations. Students are due for a booster at age 16 to provide protection when they are at the highest risk. By fall of 2020 all Minnesota schools will need to report to the state how many high school seniors have their second Meningococcal immunizations.

What is meningococcal disease?

- * Meningococcal disease is a rare, serious illness caused by a bacteria (*Neisseria meningitidis*). It can cause meningitis, which is an infection of the brain and spinal cord, and it can also cause blood infections.

How does meningococcal disease spread?

- * Meningococcal disease is spread by contact with secretions (saliva or spit) from the nose and throat.
- * It can be spread through kissing, sharing silverware, drinking directly from the same container, sharing a cigarette or lipstick, and having close social contact (living in the same household).
- * It is not spread through casual contact, such as being in the same room or touching the same object.

Who is at risk?

- * In general, the risk of becoming infected with meningococcal disease is low, but anyone can get it. However, some people are at increased risk, such as:
- * First year college students who live in residential housing.
- * People who have an immune disorder called complement component deficiency or who take Solaris (eculizumab).
- * People with a damaged spleen or whose spleen has been removed.

When should my child be vaccinated?

- * All 11 to 12-year-olds should be vaccinated (since Sept. 1, 2014, changes to Minnesota's Immunization Law required this immunization for all students entering 7th grade). Older teens need a second shot when they are 16 years-old so they stay protected when their risk is the highest.
- * Teens who got meningococcal vaccine for the first time when were 13, 14, or 15 years old should still get the booster shot when they are 16 years old. If your older teen didn't get the meningococcal shot at all, you should talk to their doctor about getting it as soon as possible.