

Information About Meningococcal Disease
Grades 6-12

Dear Parent/Guardian:

You are receiving this letter because you have a student in Seattle Public Schools in 6th – 12th grade. Pursuant to RCW 28A.210.080, the legislature now requires that you be provided with information about the causes, symptoms, and methods of prevention of meningococcal meningitis. This can be a deadly disease, so it is important to know this information.

Meningococcal disease is caused by a group of bacteria that lives in the nose and throat; this can cause a disease known as meningococcal meningitis. Adolescents and young adults have an increased rate of contracting meningitis, as compared to the general population. Symptoms of the disease may include fever, chills, rash, headaches, confusion, and a stiff neck. The disease is spread through direct contact with infected material, including kissing, coughing, sneezing, or sharing eating or drinking utensils.

The Washington State Department of Health wants you to be aware of this illness and the availability of a vaccine to protect against meningitis. Vaccination can help protect against up to 83% of the meningitis diseases occurring among adolescents and young adults. While the vaccine is recommended for children entering middle school (aged 11-12) and high school (age 15), the vaccine can benefit all teenagers and young adults. **The vaccine is not required for school attendance.**

The Department of Health encourages you to learn more about meningitis disease and to speak to your child's health care provider about the immunization. You can also get more information from these websites:

- **Public Health Seattle/King County** -- (206) 296-4600
www.metrokc.gov/health/immunization/clinics.htm
- **Washington State Department of Health Immunization Program**
www.doh.wa.gov/cfh/Immunize/meningococcal.htm
- **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention**
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/meninig/mening_fs.pdf

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Adopted September 2005