

Dear Parent:

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 type of bacteria. Fortunately, this life-threatening infection is rare -- only about 75 people are infected each year in Washington. Adolescents and young adults are more likely to get meningococcal disease, especially those living in group settings, like college dorms.

A vaccine is available that can protect your child against the most common types of bacteria that cause meningococcal disease. One dose of meningococcal vaccine is recommended for all adolescents ages 11-12 years as part of their pre-teen health check-up. The vaccine is also recommended for all adolescents ages 13 through 18 who have not previously been vaccinated. College freshmen living in dorms are at increased risk for meningococcal disease and should get vaccinated before starting college if they didn't get the vaccine at a younger age. The meningococcal vaccine is not required for school or college attendance.

Here are some other ways to prevent the spread of meningococcal disease:

- Practice good hygiene (regular hand washing, covering coughs and sneezes, etc.)
- Do not share items such as eating utensils, glasses, cups, water bottles, drinks, lip gloss or toothbrushes, because they may spread meningococcal disease and other bacteria and viruses.

We encourage you to learn more about meningococcal disease and how to prevent it. More information on meningococcal disease, the vaccine, and other recommended immunizations is available on the following web sites:

Washington State Department of Health Immunization Program

Meningococcal information:

<http://www.doh.wa.gov/cfh/immunize/vaccine/meningococcal/default.htm>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Meningococcal vaccine information: www.cdc.gov/vaccines/pubs/vis/downloads/vis-mening.pdf

Disease information: http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dbmd/diseaseinfo/meningococcal_g.htm

Pre-teen immunizations: www.cdc.gov/vaccines/spec-grps/preteens-adol.htm

College students & young adults: www.cdc.gov/vaccines/spec-grps/college.htm

Children's Hospital of Philadelphia Vaccine Education Center

Meningococcal questions & answers:

http://www.chop.edu/vaccine/images/vec_mening_tear.pdf

National Meningitis Association

www.nmaus.org

The following information is being provided to you at the direction of the Washington State Legislature to help reduce cervical cancer rates in Washington by protecting girls from HPV.

What is Human Papillomavirus (HPV)?

HPV is a very common virus that is spread through genital contact. At least 50 percent of sexually active people will get HPV at some time in their lives. There are many types of HPV. Some types can cause cervical cancer or genital warts. Both women and men can get HPV and easily spread it to others without knowing they have it.

What are the symptoms of HPV?

Most people with HPV have no signs or symptoms. Some people know they have HPV because they have a symptom like genital warts. Women may find out they have HPV through cervical cancer screening (Pap tests) and HPV testing. Health care providers do not usually test for HPV unless abnormal cervical cell changes are detected by a Pap test.

How can HPV infection be prevented?

The best way to prevent HPV infection is to abstain from all sexual activity. People with only one lifetime partner can get HPV if their partner had previous sexual partners. It is uncertain how well condoms protect against HPV infection. However, condom users do have lower cervical cancer rates. The HPV vaccine is a very effective way to prevent four types of HPV that can cause cervical cancer and genital warts.

What is the HPV vaccine?

The HPV vaccine, Gardasil,® protects against four types of HPV which cause 70 percent of cervical cancers and 90 percent of genital warts. The vaccine does not protect against all types of HPV or other sexually transmitted infections. The vaccine also does not protect against any type of HPV that someone already has. Current studies show that HPV vaccine protection lasts up to 5 years. Research will continue to determine the length of the HPV vaccine's protection.

Who should get the vaccine and when should they get it?

The federal Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices recommends the HPV vaccine for all girls age 11-12 years. The vaccine can also be given to females as young as nine and up to 26 years, if their doctor recommends it. HPV vaccine is given as a series of three shots over a six month period. The vaccine is not currently recommended for boys or men. The HPV vaccine is a preventive vaccine and will offer the best protection if given before sexual activity starts. HPV vaccine is not required for school entry in Washington.

Are Pap tests still recommended for females that get the HPV vaccine?

Yes. The HPV vaccine does not protect against all of the types of HPV that can cause cervical cancer, so females will still need Pap tests.

Where can I find the HPV vaccine?

Ask your doctor, nurse, or local health clinic to find out whether your daughter needs the HPV vaccine and where you can get it. Most providers in Washington will have state-supplied HPV vaccine and there will be no cost to parents (of girls under 19 years) for the vaccine. Providers may charge an office visit and/or administration fee. The HPV vaccine is available to providers at no cost through Washington State's Universal Childhood Vaccine Program.

For more information on HPV, the Vaccine, and Cervical Cancer:

Centers for Disease Control & Prevention

www.cdc.gov/std/hpv

Washington State Department of Health

www.doh.wa.gov/cfh/immunize/documents/hpvvaccinefactsheet.pdf

American Social Health Association

www.ashastd.org

American Cancer Society

www.cancer.org