

To Parents of graduating Seniors 2011  
From Terry Haag RN School Nurse

Congratulations to all of you! I am sending a note about the Meningococcal vaccine for college health news and also a note about your students immunization record. With Infinite Campus as our school districts computer system, you are able to access your student's grades and also their immunization records through the Parent Portal. Your password to look up grades is the same code to access their immunization records. This is an easy way to access this information and print out an immunization record, as you need it for college and job applications. If you are not on the Parent Portal you can call Kris Wendorf in the District Office at 592-3851 ext. 5483 to get set up. You can also request a copy through the HS office if you need to.

### **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.

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),<sup>1</sup> adolescents at high school entry (15-year-olds), if they have not previously been immunized, and for college freshmen living in dormitories.

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.

A meningococcal vaccine is available for use among persons aged 11 to 55 years, which provides protection against four of the five types of bacteria that cause meningococcal disease. Many parents are unaware of the dangers the disease poses to their children and that a vaccine is available that may help to prevent up to 83 percent of cases among teens and college students. Immunization is the most effective way to prevent this very serious disease

#### **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.

Meningococcal disease is spread through direct contact with respiratory and/or oral secretions from infected persons (for example, kissing or sharing drinking containers). It can develop and spread quickly throughout the body, so early diagnosis and treatment are very important. Even with immediate treatment, the disease can kill an otherwise healthy young person within hours of

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<sup>1</sup> Due to demand for the conjugate meningococcal vaccine outpacing current available supply, the CDC has temporarily recommended deferring vaccination of 11- to 12-year-olds at the preadolescent doctor's visit until sufficient vaccine supply is available.

first symptoms. **Approximately 10%-14% of people that contract the disease die from it.** Of those who survive, up to 20 percent may endure permanent disabilities, including brain damage, deafness and limb amputations.

Lifestyle factors common among teenagers and college students are believed to put them at increased risk of contracting meningococcal disease. These lifestyle factors include crowded living situations (for example, dormitories, 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.

- [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)
- Please speak with your physician or Columbia Public Health, or Dane County Public Health, to schedule or find out more about the meningococcal vaccine.

Thank you Terry Haag RN Lodi School District Nurse