



Dear Parents, Guardians, and Students,

Indiana State Law IC 20-30-5-18 requires that school systems provide important information to parents and guardians of all students about meningitis and the vaccines available to prevent one type of this serious illness every school year.

One type of meningitis is caused by a bacterium called *Neisseria meningitidis*. Infections caused by this bacterium are serious, and may lead to death. Symptoms of an infection with *Neisseria meningitidis* may include a high fever, headache, stiff neck, nausea, confusion and a rash. This disease can become severe very quickly and often leads to deafness, mental retardation, loss of arms or legs and even death. The bacteria are spread from person to person through the exchange of nose and throat secretions, such as kissing or shared eating or drinking utensils. The bacteria are not spread by casual contact or by simply breathing the air where a person with meningitis has been.

There are several vaccines that prevent cases of this disease in teens and young adults. The United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends vaccination of children with the meningococcal conjugate vaccine (Menactra and Menveo) at 11 or 12 years old, with a booster dose of the vaccine at 16 years of age. The booster dose at age 16 assures protection from the disease during a time when children are at a greater risk of infection. Children ages 9 months -10 years old who have sickle cell anemia or problems with their immune systems should also receive the vaccine.

The state of Indiana requires all students in grades 6-12 to have the appropriate number of meningococcal conjugate vaccine doses. One dose of meningococcal conjugate vaccine is required for all students in 6th-11th grade. A second booster dose is required for students entering 12th grade. These vaccines are a legal requirement for school entry (Indiana Administrative Code 410 IAC 1-1-1) for the 2014-2015 school year.

All students in grades 6-12 must have acceptable documentation of required immunizations on record at the school they are currently attending. An acceptable record includes, a signed record from the child's health care provider indicating the name of the vaccine and the date it was given, a record of the immunization in the state immunization registry (CHIRP) prior to the start of the school year, or a record from another school showing the required immunizations have been given.

Many local health departments and private healthcare providers offer this vaccine. Please contact your health care provider for specific instructions regarding your child.

More information about meningococcal disease can be found at:

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website:

<http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vpd-vac/mening/default.htm>

IN State Department of Health website:

<http://www.in.gov/isdh/25455.htm>