

Dear Parent,

New York State law requires that we inform you about meningococcal disease, a potentially fatal bacterial infection commonly referred to as meningitis, and a new law in New York State. On July 22, 2003, the New York State Public Health Law was amended and now requires overnight children's camps to distribute information about meningococcal disease and vaccination to the parents or guardians of all campers who attend camp for 7 or more nights. The law became effective on August 15, 2003.

Camp Ma-He-Tu is required to maintain a record of the following for each camper:

- A response to receipt of meningococcal meningitis disease and vaccine information signed by the camper's parent or guardian; AND
- Information on the availability and cost of meningococcal meningitis vaccine (Menomune); AND EITHER
- A record of meningococcal meningitis immunization within the past 10 years; OR
- An acknowledgement of meningococcal meningitis disease risks and refusal of meningococcal meningitis immunization signed by the camper's parent or guardian.

Meningitis is rare. However, when it strikes, its flu-like symptoms make diagnosis difficult. If not treated early, meningitis can lead to swelling of the fluid surrounding the brain and spinal column as well as severe and permanent disabilities, such as hearing loss, brain damage, seizures, limb amputation and even death. Cases of meningitis among teens and young adults 15 to 24 years of age have more than double since 1991. The disease strikes about 3,000 Americans each year and claims about 300 lives.

A vaccine is available that protects against four types of the bacteria that cause meningitis in the United States – types A, C, Y, and W-135. These types account for nearly two thirds of meningitis cases among teens and young adults. Information about the availability and cost of the vaccine can be obtained from your health care provider and by visiting the manufacturer's website at www.meningitisvaccine.com. Camp Ma-He-Tu does not offer meningococcal immunization services.

We ask that you carefully review the enclosed materials. **Please complete the Meningococcal Vaccination Response Form and return it with your daughter's medical form to Marion Schumacher, Registrar, 6 Soundview Drive North, Huntington, NY 11743.**

To learn more about meningitis and the vaccine, please consult with your child's physician. You can also find information about the disease at the New York State Department of Health website: www.health.state.ny.us, and the website of the Center for Disease Control and Prevention: www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dbmd/diseaseinfo.

Sincerely,

Marion Schumacher, Registrar

New York State Department of Health

Meningococcal Disease

Last Reviewed: November 2006

What is meningococcal disease?

Meningococcal disease is a severe bacterial infection of the bloodstream or meninges (a thin lining covering the brain and spinal cord) caused by the meningococcus germ.

Who gets meningococcal disease?

Anyone can get meningococcal disease, but it is more common in infants and children. For some adolescents, such as first-year college students living in dormitories, there is an increased risk of meningococcal disease. Every year in the United States approximately 2,500 people are infected and 300 die from the disease. Other persons at increased risk include household contacts of a person known to have had this disease, immunocompromised people, and people traveling to parts of the world where meningococcal meningitis is prevalent.

How is the meningococcus germ spread?

The meningococcus germ is spread by direct close contact with nose or throat discharges of an infected person.

What are the symptoms?

High fever, headache, vomiting, stiff neck and a rash are symptoms of meningococcal disease. The symptoms may appear two to 10 days after exposure, but usually within five days. Among people who develop meningococcal disease, 10 to 15 percent die, in spite of treatment with antibiotics. Of those who live, permanent brain damage, hearing loss, kidney failure, loss of arms or legs, or chronic nervous system problems can occur.

What is the treatment for meningococcal disease?

Antibiotics, such as penicillin G or ceftriaxone, can be used to treat people with meningococcal disease.

Should people who have been in contact with a diagnosed case of meningococcal meningitis be treated?

Only people who have been in close contact (household members, intimate contacts, health care personnel performing mouth-to-mouth resuscitation, daycare center playmates, etc.) need to be considered for preventive treatment. Such people are usually advised to obtain a prescription for a special antibiotic (either rifampin, ciprofloxacin or ceftriaxone) from their physician. Casual contact, as might occur in a regular classroom, office or factory setting, is not usually significant enough to cause concern.

Is there a vaccine to prevent meningococcal meningitis?

In February 2005 the CDC recommended a new vaccine, known as Menactra™, for use to prevent meningococcal disease in people 11 to 55 years of age. The previously licensed version of this vaccine, Menomune™, is available for children two to 10 years old and adults older than 55 years. Both vaccines are 85

to 100 percent effective in preventing the four kinds of the meningococcus germ (types A, C, Y, W-135). These four types cause about 70 percent of the disease in the United States. Because the vaccines do not include type B, which accounts for about one-third of cases in adolescents, they do not prevent all cases of meningococcal disease.

Is the vaccine safe? Are there adverse side effects to the vaccine?

Both vaccines are currently available and both are safe and effective vaccines. However, both vaccines may cause mild and infrequent side effects, such as redness and pain at the injection site lasting up to two days.

Who should get the meningococcal vaccine?

The vaccine is recommended for all adolescents entering middle school (11 to 12 years old) and high school (15 years old), and all first-year college students living in dormitories. However, the vaccine will benefit all teenagers and young adults in the United States. Also at increased risk are people with terminal complement deficiencies or asplenia, some laboratory workers and travelers to endemic areas of the world.

What is the duration of protection from the vaccine?

Menomune™, the older vaccine, requires booster doses every three to five years. Although research is still pending, the new vaccine, Menactra™, will probably not require booster doses.

How do I get more information about meningococcal disease and vaccination?

Contact your physician or your student health service. Additional information is also available on the Web sites of the New York State Department of Health, www.nyhealth.gov; the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention www.cdc.gov/ncidod/diseases/index.htm; and the American College Health Association, www.acha.org.

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