

HPV and Meningococcal Information Letter

Dear Parent or Guardian:

As of July 2005, schools in Washington State are required to make information available on Meningococcal and Human papillomavirus (HPV) diseases to parents or guardians of all students entering Grades 6–12.

Meningococcal Disease and Prevention

Meningococcal Disease

Meningococcal disease is a serious infection of the brain (meningitis) and blood caused by a bacterium. Fortunately, this life-threatening infection is rare – usually only about 30–60 cases are reported each year in Washington, including 1 to 8 deaths. Adolescents and young adults are more likely to get meningococcal disease, especially if they live in group settings, like college dorms.

Meningococcal Vaccine

A vaccine is available to protect your child against the most common types of bacteria that cause meningococcal disease. This vaccine and many others are available at no cost to patients younger than 19 years of age in Washington State. One dose of meningococcal vaccine is recommended for all adolescents aged 11–12 years as part of their pre-teen health check-up. The vaccine is also recommended for all adolescents aged 13–18 who have not had the vaccine. College freshmen living in dorms are at more 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 attendance in Washington.

Other Prevention Measures

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

- Practice good hygiene (wash your hands often, cover your coughs and sneezes, stay home when you're sick, etc.)
- Do not share items such as eating utensils, glasses, cups, water bottles, drinks, lipstick, or toothbrushes because they may spread meningococcal disease and other bacteria and viruses.

Learn More

Learn more about meningococcal disease and how to prevent it on the following Web sites:

Washington State Profile

Meningococcal information: 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: www.cdc.gov/meningitis/about/faq.html

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

Meningococcus questions & answers: www.chop.edu/vaccine/images/vec_mening_tear.pdf

National Meningitis Association

www.nmaus.org

Human papillomavirus (HPV) Disease and Prevention

Human papillomavirus (HPV) Disease

What is 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. Most are harmless and do not cause infections or symptoms. Some types can cause cervical cancer while others can cause 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 they find abnormal cervical cell changes in a Pap test.

How can HPV infection be prevented?

The best way to prevent HPV infection is to abstain from all sexual activity. There is a vaccine against HPV that can prevent infections from some of the most common and serious types of HPV. People with only one lifetime partner can get HPV if their partner had previous sexual partners. Using condoms during sex may lower the risk of getting HPV and may lower the risk of developing HPV-related diseases, such as genital warts and cervical cancer. HPV vaccines offer the best protection if given before sexual activity starts - they do not get rid of existing HPV infections.

HPV Vaccine

What HPV vaccines are available?

Two HPV vaccines are available. Both vaccines protect against two HPV strains that cause 70 percent of cervical cancer in women. One of the vaccines also protects against two types of HPV that cause most genital warts in females and males. The vaccines don't protect against all types of HPV or other sexually transmitted infections.

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

The federal Advisory Committee on Immunization Practice recommends that all girls age 11-12 years old should get vaccinated against HPV. Health care providers may also give the vaccine to girls as young as 9 years, and to girls and women aged 13-26 years who haven't gotten the vaccine yet.

One of the HPV vaccines is also licensed for boys and men ages 9-26 years to prevent genital warts. It is not yet recommended for all boys and men like it is for girls and women. Health care providers can offer the vaccine to males and give the vaccine upon request.

For both females and males, three doses are needed. The second dose should be given one to two months after the first. The third dose should be given six months after the first. HPV vaccine is not required for school in Washington.

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

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

Where can I find the HPV vaccine?

Ask your doctor, nurse, or local health clinic to find out more about HPV vaccine and where you can get it. In Washington, the vaccine is available at no-cost for all children through age 18 as part of the state Childhood Vaccine Program. Health care providers may charge an administration fee (this fee may be waived if patient can't pay) or an office visit fee. For people age 19-26, most health insurance plans cover the vaccine for people recommended to get it.

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