



NEWSLETTER/WEB ARTICLE

VACCINE RECOMMENDED TO PROTECT ADOLESCENTS AND YOUNG ADULTS FROM A DEADLY FORM OF MENINGITIS

Adolescents and young adults are at increased risk for a type of meningitis that can very quickly lead to death or disability in an otherwise healthy child, but there are vaccines available to help protect them. This infection is called meningococcal disease and the vaccines against it are recommended for all adolescents 11 through 18 years of age, ideally at their 11-12 year-old checkup.

Although it is rare, meningococcal disease can kill a healthy adolescent within 48 hours of the first symptoms. For those who survive, up to one in five will suffer permanent disability such as brain damage, deafness and limb amputations.

For families who have experienced the disease, the effects can be devastating. "My son Evan, a healthy, active 19 year-old college junior, died needlessly from meningococcal disease. No one ever told me about vaccination. If they had, my son would have been immunized, and would be alive today," said Lynn Bozof, President of the National Meningitis Association. "Parents need to know about meningococcal disease and understand that it can be prevented. No parent should ever have to lose a child to a vaccine-preventable disease."

The number of meningococcal disease cases changes from year to year. From 1998-2007, on average about 1,500 Americans were infected each year and about one in nine died. Nearly 15 percent of all meningococcal disease cases occurred among adolescents and young adults, and in this age group, about one in seven died.

Early symptoms of meningococcal disease often mimic those of the flu, including fever, headache, fatigue, muscle aches and stiff neck, making it difficult to identify and diagnose. Due to the fast acting nature of this disease and potentially devastating outcomes, prevention is critical.

"Immunization is the most effective way to prevent this disease among adolescents and young adults," says Susan J. Rehm, MD, Medical Director, National Foundation for Infectious Diseases. "The vaccines protect against four of the five most common types of meningococcal bacteria that circulate in the United States. The majority of cases among adolescent can potentially be prevented through vaccination."

Health officials believe the increased risk in adolescents and young adults is connected to activities that put them in long-term, close contact with those who may carry the deadly bacteria, such as living in a dormitory or boarding school, attending sleep-away camps or participating on sports teams. Bacteria that cause meningococcal disease are spread more easily in close-contact environments or by direct contact with secretions from the nose and throat of an infected person, e.g., through coughing, sneezing or kissing.

For more information on vaccines recommended for adolescents, please visit, <http://stopmeningitis.nfidinitiatives.org/main.html>.

If your child is 11 to 18 years old, please contact us for more information or to schedule a vaccination appointment.



A public education initiative brought to you by the National Foundation for Infectious Diseases in collaboration with leading healthcare organizations. The goals of this program are supported by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. For more information and a list of supporting organizations and additional resource materials, please visit, <http://stopmeningitis.nfidinitiatives.org>.