



SUMMER NEWSLETTER

Does Your Child Need a Meningococcal Vaccination Before Heading to Summer Camp?

Summer can be a fun-filled, carefree time for your children. But before they head off to camp, it's important to ensure they have been vaccinated against a type of infection that can cause meningitis and very quickly lead to death or disability in an otherwise healthy child. This infection is called meningococcal disease, and vaccination against it is 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 within 48 hours of the first symptoms. For those who survive, up to two in ten will suffer permanent disability such as brain damage, deafness or limb amputations. Adolescents are at increased risk for contracting the disease and health officials believe this risk is connected to activities that put them in long-term, close contact, such as 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 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, 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, 1,500 Americans were infected each year and about one in nine died. Among adolescents and young adults, 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 moving nature of this disease and potentially devastating outcomes, prevention is critical.

"Immunization is the most effective way to prevent meningococcal disease among adolescents and young adults," says Susan J. Rehm, MD, Medical Director, National Foundation for Infectious Diseases. "The summer months can be a busy time for families. But it is important to ensure your children are up-to-date on their immunizations, particularly before they attend sleep-away camp."

For more information on vaccines recommended for adolescents, please visit www.adolescentvaccination.org.

Help your adolescent children start the summer protected! 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>.