



OFFICE OF HEALTH SERVICES

COLLEGE PARENT LETTER

Dear Parent:

As the college health services director at Queensborough Community College, I am writing to inform you about meningococcal disease, a potentially fatal bacterial infection commonly referred to as meningitis. New York State Public Health Law (NYS PHL) §2167 requires institutions, including colleges and universities, to distribute information about meningococcal disease and vaccine to all students meeting the enrollment criteria, whether they live on or off campus.

Queensborough Community College is required to maintain a record of the following for each student:

- A response to receipt of meningococcal disease and vaccine information signed by the student or student's parent or guardian
AND EITHER
- A record of meningococcal immunization within the past 5 years; OR
- An acknowledgement of meningococcal disease risks and refusal of meningococcal immunization signed by the student or student's parent or guardian.

Meningococcal disease is rare. However, when it strikes, its flu like symptoms make diagnosis difficult. Meningococcal disease can cause serious illnesses such as infection of the lining of the brain and spinal column (meningitis) or blood infections (sepsis). The disease strikes quickly and can lead to severe and permanent disabilities, such as hearing loss, brain damage, seizures, limb amputation and even lead to death.

Meningococcal disease can be easily spread from person-to-person by coughing, sharing beverages or eating utensils, kissing, or spending time in close contact with someone who is sick or who carries the bacteria. People can spread the bacteria that causes meningococcal disease even before they know they are sick. There have been several outbreaks of meningococcal disease at college campuses across the United States.

The single best way to prevent meningococcal disease is to be vaccinated. The meningococcal ACWY (MenACWY) vaccine protects against four major strains of bacteria which cause about two-thirds of meningococcal disease in the United States (U.S.). The MenACWY vaccine is recommended for all U.S. teenagers and young adults up to age 21 years. Protection from the MenACWY vaccine is estimated to last about 3 to 5 years, so young adults who received the MenACWY vaccine before their 16th birthday should get a booster dose before entering college. The meningococcal B (MenB) vaccine protects against a fifth type of meningococcal disease, which accounts for about one-third of cases in the U.S. Young adults aged 16 through 23 years may choose to receive the MenB vaccine series. They should discuss the MenB vaccine with a healthcare provider.

All private insurance plans not grandfathered under the Affordable Care Act are required to cover the cost of MenACWY and MenB vaccines. Contact your health insurance plan to determine whether it covers MenACWY and MenB vaccines. The federal Vaccines for Children (VFC) and NYS Vaccines for Adults (VFA) programs will cover both MenACWY and MenB vaccines for children and adults who have no health insurance or whose health insurance does not cover these vaccines, as well as for children less than 19 years of age who are American Indian or Alaska Native or eligible for Medicaid or Child Health Plus.

QCC DOES NOT OFFER THE MENINGOCOCCAL VACCINE. THE VACCINE IS AVAILABLE THROUGH THE NYC DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH OR YOUR PROVIDER OR CLINIC THAT OFFERS THESE SERVICES.

Please carefully review the attached Meningococcal Disease Fact Sheet. It is also available on the New York State Department of Health website at www.health.ny.gov/publications/2168.pdf.

Please complete the Meningococcal Vaccination Response Form and return it to the Office of Health Services in person, via mail or fax to location, address or fax number provided as soon as possible.

To learn more about meningococcal disease and the vaccine, please feel free to contact our Office of Health Services and/or consult your child's physician. You can also find information about the disease on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website at www.cdc.gov/meningococcal/.

Sincerely,

Isabel Hocevar RN, Director of Health Services
Queensborough Community College

Attachment: **New York State Department of Health Meningococcal Disease Fact Sheet**

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Bayside, NY 11364-1497

ONE COMMUNITY. INFINITE POSSIBILITIES.

New York State Department of Health Meningococcal Disease Fact Sheet:

MENINGOCOCCAL DISEASE

What is meningococcal disease?

Meningococcal disease is caused by bacteria called *Neisseria meningitidis*. It can lead to serious blood infections. When the linings of the brain and spinal cord become inflamed, it is called meningitis. The disease strikes quickly and can have serious complications, including death.

Anyone can get meningococcal disease. Some people are at higher risk. This disease occurs more often in people who are:

- Teenagers or young adults
- Infants younger than one year of age
- Living in crowded settings, such as college dormitories or military barracks
- Traveling to areas outside of the United States, such as the “meningitis belt” in Africa
- Living with a damaged spleen or no spleen
- Being treated with Soliris® or, who have complement component deficiency (an inherited immune disorder)
- Exposed during an outbreak
- Working with meningococcal bacteria in a laboratory

What are the symptoms?

Symptoms appear suddenly - usually 3 to 4 days after a person is infected. It can take up to 10 days to develop symptoms.

Symptoms may include:

- A sudden high fever
- Headache
- Stiff neck (meningitis)
- Nausea and vomiting
- Red-purple skin rash
- Weakness and feeling very ill
- Eyes sensitive to light

How is meningococcal disease spread?

It spreads from person-to-person by coughing or coming into close or lengthy contact with someone who is sick or who carries the bacteria. Contact includes kissing, sharing drinks, or living together. Up to one in 10 people carry meningococcal bacteria in their nose or throat without getting sick.

Is there treatment?

Early diagnosis of meningococcal disease is very important. If it is caught early, meningococcal disease can be treated with antibiotics. But, sometimes the infection has caused too much damage for antibiotics to prevent death or serious long-term problems. Most people need to be cared for in a hospital due to serious, life-threatening infections.

What are the complications?

Ten to 15 percent of those who get meningococcal disease die. Among survivors, as many as one in five will have permanent disabilities. Complications include:

- Hearing loss
- Brain damage
- Kidney damage
- Limb amputations

What should I do if I or someone I love is exposed?

If you are in close contact with a person with meningococcal disease, talk with your health care provider about the risk to you and your family. They can prescribe an antibiotic to prevent the disease.

What is the best way to prevent meningococcal disease?

The single best way to prevent this disease is to be vaccinated. Vaccines are available for people 6 weeks of age and older. Various vaccines offer protection against the five major strains of bacteria that cause meningococcal disease:

- All teenagers should receive two doses of vaccine against strains A, C, W and Y. The first dose is given at 11 to 12 years of age, and the second dose (booster) at age 16.
- It is very important that teens receive the booster dose at age 16 in order to protect them through the years when they are at greatest risk of meningococcal disease.
- Talk to your health care provider today if your teen has not received two doses of vaccine against meningococcal strains A, C, W and Y.
- Teens and young adults can also be vaccinated against the “B” strain. Talk to your health care provider about whether they recommend vaccine against the “B” strain.

Others who should receive the vaccine include:

- Infants, children and adults with certain medical conditions
- People exposed during an outbreak
- Travelers to the “meningitis belt” of sub-Saharan Africa
- Military recruits

Please speak with your health care provider if you may be at increased risk.

What are the meningococcal vaccine requirements for school attendance?

As of September 1, 2016, children entering grades 7 and 12 must be immunized against meningococcal disease strains A, C, W and Y according to the recommendations listed above.

Is there an increased risk for meningococcal disease if I travel?

- Meningococcal disease and outbreaks occur in the United States and around the world. The disease is more common in the “meningitis belt” of sub-Saharan Africa. The risk is highest in people who visit these countries and who have prolonged contact with local populations during an epidemic.
- To reduce your risk of illness, wash your hands often, maintain healthy habits such as getting plenty of rest and try not to come into contact with people who are sick.

Learn more about meningococcal disease: www.cdc.gov/meningococcal/

Travel and meningococcal disease: wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/diseases/meningococcal-disease

For more information about vaccine-preventable diseases: www.health.ny.gov/prevention/immunization/

MENINGOCOCCAL VACCINATION RESPONSE FORM

New York State Public Health Law requires that all college and university students, complete and return the following form to the Office of Health Services.

Check one box and sign below.

I have (for students under the age of 18: My child has):

- had meningococcal immunization within the past 5 years. The vaccine record is attached.
[Note: The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices recommends that all first-year college students up to age 21 years should have at least 1 dose of Meningococcal ACWY vaccine not more than 5 years before enrollment, preferably on or after their 16th birthday, and that young adults aged 16 through 23 years may choose to receive the Meningococcal B vaccine series. College and university students should discuss the Meningococcal B vaccine with a healthcare provider.]
- read, or has had explained to me, the information regarding meningococcal disease.
I (my child) will obtain immunization against meningococcal disease within 30 days from my private health care provider or other immunization location.
- read, or has had explained to me, the information regarding meningococcal disease. I understand the risks of not receiving the vaccine. I have decided that I (my child) will not obtain immunization against meningococcal disease.

Signed _____
(Parent / Guardian if student is a minor)

Date _____

Print Student's name _____

Student
Date of Birth ____ / ____ / ____

Student
E-mail address _____

Student ID# _____

Student
Mailing Address _____

Student
Phone number (_____) _____ - _____