

INFORMATION ABOUT MENINGOCOCCAL MENINGITIS

Dear Parent/Student:

Columbia-Greene Community College is writing to 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, Governor Pataki signed New York State Public Health Law (NYS PHL) §2167 requiring institutions, including colleges and universities, to distribute information about meningococcal disease and vaccination to all students meeting the enrollment criteria, whether they live on or off campus. This law is effective as of August 15, 2003.

Colleges in New York State are 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. This must include information on the availability and cost of meningococcal meningitis vaccine (Menactra™);
AND EITHER
- A record of meningococcal meningitis immunization within the past 10 years; OR
- An acknowledgement of meningococcal disease risks and refusal of meningococcal meningitis immunization signed by the student or student's parent or guardian.

Meningitis is rare. However, when it strikes, its flu-like symptoms make diagnosis difficult. If not tested 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 (the age of most college students) have more than doubled since 1991. The disease strikes about 3,000 Americans each year and claims about 300 lives. Between 100 and 125 meningitis cases occur on college campuses and as many as 15 students will die from the disease.

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 college students.

If you wish to receive the meningococcal meningitis vaccine (Menactra™), it is available through your private health care provider. The cost of the vaccine usually ranges from \$60.00 to \$85.00. Please check with your campus health services for details.

Please make sure you complete and return the enclosed Meningococcal Meningitis Response Form within 30 days. Please note that according to NYS Public Health Law, no institution shall permit and student to attend the institution in excess of 30 days without complying with this law. The 30 day period may be extended to 60 days if a student can show a good faith effort to comply.

To learn more about meningitis and the vaccine, please see the enclosed Meningococcal Meningitis Fact Sheet, consult with your (child's) physician or contact the campus health services. You can also find information about the disease at the New York State Department of Health Website: WWW.HEALTH.STATE.NY.US, website of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC): WWW.CDC.GOV/NCIDOD/DBMD/DISEASEINFO, and the American College Health Association (ACHA) Website: WWW.ACHA.ORG.

MENINGOCOCCAL MENINGITIS FACT SHEET

WHAT IS MENINGOCOCCAL MENINGITIS? Meningococcal disease is a severe bacterial infection of the bloodstream or meninges (a thin lining covering the brain and spinal cord). It is a relatively rare disease and usually occurs as a single isolated event. Clusters of cases or outbreaks are rare in the United States.

HOW IS THE GERM MENINGOCOCCUS SPREAD? Meningococcal disease is transmitted through the air via droplets of respiratory secretions and direct contact with an infected person. Direct contact, for these purposes, is defined as oral contact with shared items such as cigarettes or drinking glasses or through intimate contact such as kissing. Although anyone can come in contact with the bacteria that causes meningococcal disease, data also indicates certain social behaviors, such as exposure to passive and active smoking, bar patronage, and excessive alcohol consumption, may put students at increased risk for the disease. Patients with respiratory infections, compromised immunity, those in close contact to a known case, and travelers to endemic areas of the world are also at increased risk.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS? The early symptoms usually associated with meningococcal disease include fever, severe headache, stiff neck, rash, nausea, vomiting, and lethargy, and may resemble the flu. Because the disease progresses rapidly, often in as little as 12 hours, students are urged to seek medical care immediately if they experience two or more of these symptoms concurrently. The disease is occasionally fatal.

HOW SOON DO THE SYMPTOMS APPEAR? The symptoms may appear two to ten days after exposure, but usually within five days.

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, day care 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? Presently, there is a vaccine that will protect against some of the strains of meningococcus. It is recommended in outbreak situations, and for those traveling to areas of the world where high rates of the disease are known to occur. For some college students, such as freshmen living in dormitories, there is a modestly increased risk of meningococcal disease; students and parents should be educated about meningococcal disease and the availability of a safe and effective vaccine.

HOW EFFECTIVE IS THE VACCINE? The meningococcal vaccine has been shown to provide protection against the most common strains of the disease, including serogroups A, C, Y and W-135. The vaccine has shown to be 85 to 100 percent effective in serogroups A and C in older children and adults.

IS THE VACCINE SAFE? ARE THERE ADVERSE SIDE EFFECTS TO THE VACCINE? The vaccine is very safe and adverse reactions are mild and infrequent, consisting primarily of redness and pain at the site of injection lasting up to two days.

WHAT IS THE DURATION OF PROTECTION? The duration of the meningococcal vaccine's efficacy is approximately three to five years.

MENINGITIS INFORMATION RESPONSE FORM

New York State Public Health Law requires that all college and university students enrolled for at least six (6) semester hours or the equivalent per semester, or at least four (4) semester hours per quarter, complete and return the following form to:

Susan Leicht Curran, RN
Director of Health Services
Columbia-Greene Community College
4400 Route 23
Hudson, NY 12534

Please note that according to NYS Public Health Law, no institution shall permit any student to attend the institution in excess of 30 days without complying with this law. The 30 day period may be extended to 60 days if a student can show a good faith effort to comply.

Check one box and sign below.

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

- had the meningococcal meningitis immunization (Menactra™) within the past 10 years.

Date received: _____

[Note: If you (your child) received the meningococcal vaccine available before February 2005 called Menomune™, please note this vaccine's protection lasts for approximately 3 to 5 years. Revaccination with the new conjugate vaccine called Menactra™ should be considered within 3-5 years after receiving Menomune™.]

- read, or have had explained to me, the information regarding meningococcal meningitis disease. I understand the risks of not receiving the vaccine. I have decided that I (my child) will **not** obtain immunization against meningococcal meningitis disease.

Signed _____ **Date** _____

Student Signature OR (Parent/Guardian if student is a minor)

Student's name _____

Student
Date of Birth _____

Student
E-mail address _____

Student
Mailing Address _____

Student ID Number:

Student
Phone Number _____ () _____