



[Nurse Name]  
[School Address]  
[Phone]  
[Current Date]

## Re: Meningococcal Disease Education

Dear Parent or Guardian,

As you prepare for sports health exams or yearly check-ups, ensuring your children are protected and up-to-date with all their vaccinations, I want to remind you about an important vaccination for a disease that may not be top of mind – meningococcal disease.

According to a national survey\* recently conducted by Harris Poll on behalf of *Voices of Meningitis*, an educational initiative from the National Association of School Nurses (NASN) in collaboration with Sanofi Pasteur, approximately two out of three mothers have little to no knowledge of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) recommendations to help prevent meningococcal meningitis. The recommendations advise that a child receive an initial vaccination at age 11 or 12 years, followed by a second vaccination at age 16.<sup>1</sup>

As your school nurse, I am hoping to help change these statistics and make sure parents are aware of these guidelines to help prevent meningitis. I encourage you to talk to your healthcare provider to ensure your child is up-to-date with all of his or her vaccinations.

### What is meningococcal disease?

Meningococcal disease is a serious bacterial infection that includes meningitis, swelling of the tissues around the brain and spinal cord; bacteremia, a severe blood infection; and pneumonia, a lung infection.<sup>1</sup> It can be spread through coughs, sneezes, and the exchange of respiratory droplets such as saliva.<sup>1</sup> As a result, individuals can catch the disease through common, everyday activities such as sharing water bottles, cups and utensils; kissing; and being in close quarters such as a dormitory or sleep-away summer camp.<sup>2,3</sup>

Meningococcal disease can be difficult to recognize because early symptoms or signs are similar to those of common viral illnesses, such as the flu.<sup>4</sup> The disease is rare, but it is very serious. It develops quickly and can take the life of an otherwise healthy child in as little as one day after symptoms first appear.<sup>2,4</sup>

I hope you find this information useful. Please call or visit me at my office if you have questions or concerns. I can be reached at [PHONE NUMBER] and am in my office [INSERT OFFICE HOURS FOR VISITS]. You can also talk to your child's healthcare provider or visit [www.VoicesOfMeningitis.org](http://www.VoicesOfMeningitis.org) for more information.

Sincerely,  
[INSERT NAME OF SCHOOL NURSE]  
Your School Nurse

\*NOTE: Based on a March 2014 survey of 2,003 mothers, who are the parent or guardian of at least one child between the ages of 11-18 living in their household conducted online by Harris Poll. A full methodology is available upon request.

**References:**

1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Prevention and control of meningococcal disease – recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP). *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR)*. 2013;62(2):1-13. <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/rr6202a1.htm>. Accessed July 31, 2013.
2. Stephens DS, Greenwood B, Brandtzaeg P. Epidemic meningitis, meningococcaemia, and Neisseria meningitidis. *Lancet*. 2007;369(9580):2199.
3. CDC. Meningococcal Disease. About: Causes and Transmission. <http://www.cdc.gov/meningococcal/about/causes-transmission.html>. Accessed March 24, 2014.
4. Pace, D. & Pollard, A. (2012) Meningococcal disease: Clinical presentation and sequelae. *Vaccine*. 30(S), 87.

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SANOFI PASTEUR 

  
National  
Association of  
School Nurses

*Voices of Meningitis* is made possible through a collaboration with Sanofi Pasteur