

Dear Parents, Guardians and Students,

Indiana State Law IC 20-30-5-18 requires that school systems provide important information to parents and guardians of all students about meningitis and the vaccines available to prevent one type of this serious illness at the beginning of the school year.

One type of meningitis is caused by a bacterium called *Neisseria meningitidis*. Infections caused by this bacterium are serious, and may lead to death. Symptoms of an infection with *Neisseria meningitidis* may include a high fever, headache, stiff neck, nausea, confusion and a rash. This disease can become severe very quickly and often leads to deafness, mental retardation, loss of arms or legs and even death. The bacteria is spread from person to person through the exchange of nose and throat secretions, such as kissing or sharing eating or drinking utensils. The bacteria is not spread by casual contact or by simply breathing the air where a person with meningitis has been. However, sometimes the bacteria that cause meningitis have spread to other people who have had close or prolonged contact with a patient with *Neisseria meningitidis*. People in the same household or anyone with direct contact with a patient's oral secretions (such as a boyfriend or girlfriend) would be considered at increased risk of getting the infection.

According to the CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention): There are two kinds of vaccines that protect against *Neisseria meningitidis* available in the United States: Meningococcal polysaccharide vaccine (Menomune) and meningococcal conjugate vaccine (Menactra, Menveo and MenHibrix).

The United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends a dose of meningococcal vaccine for children that are 11 or 12 years old, with a booster dose of the vaccine at 16 years of age. Talk to your physician if your child has a weak immune system or who have sickle cell anemia, this vaccine may be appropriate/ recommended for them. See information below for other vaccination information and or talk to your physician.

According to the Indiana State Department of Health, all students in grades 6-11 are required to have one meningococcal vaccination. A second dose is required for students entering 12th grade.

All students must have acceptable documentation of the required immunizations or a letter of exemption on file.

Many local health departments and private healthcare providers offer this vaccine. Please contact your health care provider for specific instructions regarding your child.

More information about meningococcal disease can be found at:

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website:
<http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vpd-vac/mening/default.htm>

IN State Department of Health website:
<http://www.in.gov/isdh/25455.htm>

Sincerely,

Switzerland County School Corporation