

Meningococcal and HPV

Dear Parent or Guardian,

As a parent, there is nothing more important than safeguarding your child's health. The Washington State Legislature requires us to make information available to you about meningococcal disease and human papillomavirus (HPV). Know the facts about these diseases and the vaccines available to protect your child.

Meningococcal Disease and Prevention

What is meningococcal disease?

Meningococcal disease is a serious bacterial infection. Fortunately, this life-threatening illness is rare, with only 20-30 cases reported each year in Washington. The most common symptoms of the disease include fever, cough, headache, and rash. It can cause meningitis (swelling of the covering of the brain and spinal cord). The disease spreads through close contact with an infected person. Teens and young adults are more likely to get meningococcal disease, especially if they live in group settings like college dorms.

How can I protect my child from meningococcal disease?

The meningococcal conjugate vaccine, or MCV4, prevents against four types of the disease. It is recommended for all children between 11 and 12 years of age, and again at 16 to 18 years of age. The meningococcal B vaccine, or MenB, is recommended for some children with rare health conditions or who are at risk during a meningococcal B outbreak.

For more information about meningococcal disease and how to prevent it:

- Washington State Department of Health: www.doh.wa.gov/Immunization/DiseasesandVaccines/MeningitisMeningococcalDisease
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: www.cdc.gov/meningococcal

Human Papillomavirus (HPV) and Prevention

What is HPV?

HPV is a common virus. Most people exposed to HPV will never develop health issues. But for others, HPV causes major health problems, including cervical, anal, vulvar, mouth, and throat cancer. Most infected people have no symptoms and may spread the virus without knowing it. HPV spreads mainly through sexual contact.

How can I protect my child from HPV?

Make sure your child gets the HPV vaccine. The vaccine is highly effective. The best time to get it is before sexual activity ever starts. The HPV vaccine can prevent infection from some of the most common and serious types of HPV that cause cancer and genital warts. The vaccine does not get rid of existing HPV infections.

Who should get the vaccine and when should they get it?

Because the immunization is more effective when given at younger ages, 9 through 14 year olds need 2 doses. Those starting at 15 or older need three doses. The recommended age is 11 or 12. HPV vaccine may be given up to age 26.

For more information on HPV, the vaccine, and cervical cancer:

- Washington State Department of Health: www.doh.wa.gov/hpv
- Centers for Disease Control & Prevention: www.cdc.gov/hpv
- American Cancer Society: www.cancer.org

Where can I find the meningococcal and HPV vaccines?

Talk to your healthcare provider about the vaccines your child needs. In addition to meningococcal and HPV, your preteen should receive Tdap. Washington offers vaccines at no cost to kids through age 18. Providers may charge an office visit fee or administration fee to give the vaccine. If you can't afford these fees, you can ask to have them waived.

Sincerely,

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