

Mustang Public Schools

906 S Heights Drive
Mustang, OK 73064

July 20th 2012

Dear Parents,

Senate Bill 1467, which becomes effective November 1, 2006, requires school districts to provide information about the health risk of meningococcal meningitis to parents and guardians of students in secondary schools. While, there is no immediate concern regarding this disease in our area, Mustang Schools is providing the information as required at this time due to the legislation.

The immunization services of the Oklahoma State Department of Health prepared the meningococcal meningitis fact sheet found on the opposite side of this letter. Should you need further information, please contact your local physician, the County Health Department, or the Comprehensive Health Section at (405) 521-6645.

Regards,



Deborah Beel
Director of Special Services
Mustang Public Schools

Important Information for Parents About Meningococcal Disease and Meningococcal Vaccines from the Oklahoma State Department of Education and the Oklahoma State Department of Health

What is meningitis?

Meningitis is an infection of the tissue lining and fluid that surround the spinal cord and the brain. Meningitis is usually caused by a virus or a bacterium. Meningitis caused by a virus is usually less severe and goes away without any special treatment, while meningitis caused by bacteria can be severe and may cause:

- Brain damage,
- Hearing loss,
- Amputation of arms or legs,
- Learning disabilities, or
- Death.

What types of bacteria cause meningitis?

There are several types of bacteria that may cause meningitis, including:

- *Neisseria meningitidis*
- *Streptococcus pneumoniae*,
- *Group B streptococcal disease*, and
- *Haemophilus influenzae* type B (Hib).

This information sheet will focus on the disease caused by *Neisseria meningitidis* (Nay-sear-e-a men-in-git-it-dis), which is rare but especially risky for people of certain ages. Disease caused by *Neisseria meningitidis* is usually referred to as "meningococcal disease" (men-IN-jo-kok-ul disease). Many persons are exposed to *Neisseria meningitidis* and carry the bacteria in their nose and throat for weeks or months and spread the bacteria to others, but do not become sick themselves. If the meningococcal bacteria invade the body, they may cause a rapidly spreading infection of the blood, lung infection, or meningitis. More information about the other kinds of bacteria that cause meningitis can be found at the web sites listed in the box at the end of this information sheet.

Who is at risk from meningococcal disease?

Babies less than a year old have the highest risk for meningococcal disease, but no vaccine is available for babies. The risk of meningococcal disease increases for teenagers and young adults 15 through age 21 years of age, because of behaviors that spread the disease. On average, two or three people in this age group get meningococcal disease every year in Oklahoma. More than half of these could be prevented by vaccine.

College students, military personnel, and other people living in close quarters or dormitory-style housing have a greater chance of contracting the disease than other persons their age. Other persons at increased risk include smokers or persons frequently exposed to second-hand smoke, those with immune system

problems, those without a spleen, or international travelers going to countries where the disease is more common.

How is the disease spread?

The disease is spread by respiratory droplets produced by a person harboring the bacteria and expelled a short distance by laughing, singing, coughing, or sneezing. The bacteria may also be spread by direct contact with the respiratory fluids of someone who is infected. That includes kissing, or sharing a water bottle, food item, cigarettes, lipstick, lip balm, mouth guard or anything an infected person touches with his or her nose or mouth.

Why is meningococcal disease dangerous?

Meningococcal disease is relatively uncommon with about 2,500 people affected every year in the United States. However, the infection can spread very quickly and 300 of those people die in spite of treatment with antibiotics. Of those who live, about 400 a year lose their arms or legs, become deaf, have problems with their nervous systems, become mentally retarded, or suffer seizures or strokes.

For this reason, it is best to prevent the disease from occurring. Signs and symptoms of meningococcal disease may be confused with other infectious diseases. If your child has symptoms of meningococcal disease, contact your healthcare provider immediately.

Signs and Symptoms of Meningitis

- Headache
- Fever
- Chills
- Stiff neck
- Extreme tiredness
- Vomiting
- Sensitivity to light
- Rash of purplish black-red dots or blotches
- Confusion
- Seizures

How can meningococcal disease be prevented?

Vaccines can prevent approximately two-thirds of the meningococcal disease cases. There are two types of meningococcal vaccine available in the United States (MCV4 and MPSV4) that protect against four of the five most common disease-causing strains of the meningococcal bacteria.