

September 16, 2020

Dear Parents, Guardians, and Students,

Meningococcal meningitis and certain bloodstream infections can be caused by a bacterium called *Neisseria meningitidis*. Infections caused by this bacterium are serious and can quickly turn critical, leading to brain damage, hearing loss, and even death. This bacterium is spread from person to person by sharing respiratory or throat secretions. This typically occurs during close contact, such as kissing or sharing eating utensils, or through persons living in close quarters, such as dormitories¹.

There are two types of meningococcal vaccine available in the United States to protect against these infections. The meningococcal conjugate vaccine, also referred to as MCV4, protects against meningococcal serogroups A, C, W and Y. The meningococcal serogroup B vaccine, also known as MenB, protects against serogroup B. Since these vaccines protect against different serogroups of the bacterium, they are not interchangeable. It is necessary to receive a complete series of both vaccines for protection against these 5 serogroups of meningococcal bacteria. Neither type of vaccine contains live meningococcal bacteria.

The United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends vaccination of all children with the MCV4 vaccine (Menactra or Menveo) at 11 or 12 years of age. A booster dose at age 16 is also recommended to provide ongoing protection from the disease after high school. The CDC also recommends that a MenB vaccine (Bexsero or Trumenba) 2-dose series may be administered to persons 16 through 23 years of age. The child's healthcare provider may make a recommendation regarding the MenB vaccine based on the child's needs².

The state of Indiana requires all students in grades 6-12 to have the appropriate number of MCV4 vaccine doses for the 2018-2019 school year. One dose is required for all students entering 6th-11th grade. A second dose is required for students entering 12th grade. Many colleges and universities require this vaccine for incoming students as well. The MenB vaccine is not an Indiana grade school requirement at this time and does not meet the meningococcal vaccine (MCV4) requirement for school entry.

All students must have acceptable documentation of required immunizations on record at the school they are currently attending. Acceptable documentation includes a signed record from the child's health care provider indicating the name of the vaccine given and the date it was given, a record of the immunization in the state immunization registry (CHIRP) prior to the start of the school year, or a record from another school showing the required immunizations have been given.

Many local health departments and private healthcare providers offer these vaccines. Please contact your healthcare provider for specific instructions regarding your child.

More information about meningococcal disease can be found at these websites:

<http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vpd-vac/mening/default.htm>

<http://www.in.gov/isdh/25455.htm>

Sincerely,
Kara Huff, School Nurse