

Children's Health Update

Meningitis Vaccination Urged For Adolescents 11-18

As Part Of Healthy Back-To-School Routine

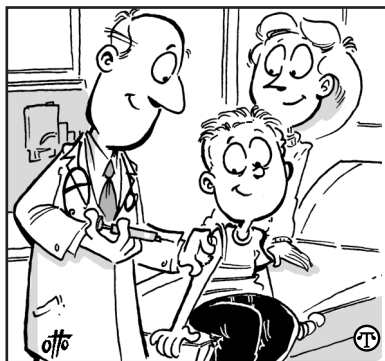
Nearly Half of Parents Are Not Aware That Public Health Officials

Recommend Vaccination for Adolescents and Young Adults

(NAPSA)—A recent national consumer survey found that while most parents have heard of meningococcal disease or meningitis, nearly half are not aware that public health officials recommend vaccination for adolescents and young adults and only one in three parents have had their child vaccinated against the disease. However, once made aware of meningococcal disease and the availability of a vaccine to prevent it, 81 percent of parents indicated they would speak to their child's physician about vaccination.

The National Meningitis Association (NMA) urges parents to talk to their child's doctor about meningococcal disease and to make an appointment to have their adolescent children vaccinated to help keep them healthy this new school year.

Meningococcal disease is a serious bacterial infection that can lead to death or permanent disability within hours. Adolescents and young adults are at increased risk for the disease; however, a majority of cases among this age group can potentially be prevented by vaccination. Health officials now recommend meningococcal immunization for all adolescents and young adults 11-18 years of age. Only one shot is needed to help protect adolescents during



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these years when they are at higher risk for getting the disease.

"My son Chris was a healthy, active high school student and star athlete when meningococcal disease took his life," said Leslie Maier, Director of the NMA, who knows firsthand the devastating effects of this disease. "Back-to-school health care visits and fall sports physicals are perfect opportunities for parents to proactively discuss meningococcal disease with their child's doctor and make an appointment for vaccination."

Meningococcal disease strikes nearly 3,000 Americans each year. Adolescents and young adults account for nearly 30 percent of

all U.S. cases. Certain factors, such as dormitory-style living, weakened immune systems that may be caused by hectic extracurricular schedules, close personal contact with other adolescents or irregular sleep patterns, may put adolescents at increased risk for infection.

Early symptoms of the disease are similar to the flu and can include high fever, headache, stiff neck, confusion, nausea, vomiting, exhaustion and a purplish rash. The disease moves quickly and can lead to death or permanent disability, such as hearing loss, brain damage and/or loss of arms and legs, within hours of first symptoms.

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NMA is a nonprofit organization founded by parents whose children have died or live with permanent disabilities from meningococcal disease. Their mission is to educate families, medical professionals and others about the disease and prevention approaches.

To learn more about meningococcal disease and prevention methods, visit the NMA Web site at www.nmaus.org.