



STATE OF CONNECTICUT

STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

MEMORANDUM

TO: Superintendents of Schools
School Medical Advisors
School Nurse Supervisors

FROM: Matthew L. Cartter, MD, MPH *Matthew Cartter*
Epidemiology and Emerging Infectious Diseases Coordinator
Connecticut Department of Public Health

Charlene Russell-Tucker, Associate Commissioner of Education *CR*
Division of Family and Student Support Services
Connecticut State Department of Education

DATE: September 30, 2008

SUBJECT: Meningococcal Meningitis Disease Information for
Children Enrolled in Secondary Schools

In accordance with Section 55 of Public Act 08-184, effective July 1, 2008, the Connecticut Department of Public Health (CT DPH), in collaboration with Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE), is required to contact each local and regional board of education to provide them with informational materials about meningococcal meningitis and the benefits of vaccination for students enrolled in secondary schools.

Meningococcal disease is a relatively rare but potentially tragic vaccine-preventable infectious disease. Each year, meningococcal disease strikes up to 3,000 Americans. Adolescents and young adults account for nearly 30 percent of all cases in the United States and have an unusually high death rate (nearly 25 percent) when compared to other age groups. In addition, 20 percent of survivors endure permanent consequences, such as brain damage, hearing loss, kidney disease and limb amputations.

In June 2007, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommended that all children 11-12 years of age be routinely vaccinated with a dose of meningococcal vaccine including children entering high school if not previously vaccinated. The goal is routine vaccination of all adolescents with meningococcal vaccine beginning at age 11 years. Prior to the 2007 recommendation, meningococcal disease prevention in the school setting had been focused on students entering college.

The CT DPH supports the CDC's recommendation and encourages all local and regional boards of education to provide informational materials regarding meningococcal meningitis disease and the benefits of vaccination to all parents and guardians of middle and high school students.

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The CT DPH has developed materials about meningococcal disease and its prevention that can be utilized by the schools for dissemination to families and students. Enclosed you will find a Public Health Fact Sheet for meningococcal disease and sample letters to parents in both Spanish and English. The Public Health Fact Sheet includes information on meningococcal disease, meningococcal disease prevention, and meningococcal vaccine. These documents can also be accessed at the CT DPH website at www.ct.gov/dph by typing in *immunization program* in the search box and clicking on *DPH Immunization Program* and then scrolling down and clicking on *meningococcal information* or the CSDE website at <http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/cwp/view.asp?a=2678&Q=320768&pm=1&sdePNavCtr=45534#45539>. Please consider sending this information to all your high school students and their families. Schools may also incorporate this information into schoolwide communications, such as a school newsletter.

It is anticipated that meningococcal vaccination will become a requirement for 7th grade school entry beginning in August of 2010.

If you have any questions about meningococcal disease, prevention and control, or vaccine recommendations, please contact the State Immunization Program at 860-509-7929.

MLC/CRT:vs/cr

Enclosures