

## Meningococcal Meningitis Parent/Guardian Letter

October 1, 2021

Dear Parent,

I am writing to inform you about meningococcal disease, a potentially fatal bacterial infection commonly referred to as meningococcal meningitis. New York State Public Health Law (NYS PHL) §2167 and Subpart 7-2 of the State Sanitary Code requires overnight children's camps to distribute information about meningococcal disease and vaccination to all campers who attend camp for 7 or more consecutive nights.

Meningococcal disease is rare. However, when it strikes, its flu-like symptoms make diagnosis difficult. Meningococcal disease can cause serious illness such as infection of the lining of the brain and spinal column (meningitis) or blood infections (sepsis). The disease strikes quickly and can lead to severe and permanent disabilities, such as hearing loss, brain damage, seizures, and limb amputation, in as many as one in five of those infected. Ten to 15 percent of those who get meningococcal disease will die.

Meningococcal disease can be easily spread from person-to-person by coughing, sharing beverages or eating utensils, kissing, or spending time in close contact with someone who is sick or who carries the bacteria. People can spread the bacteria that cause meningococcal disease even before they know they are sick.

Anyone can get meningococcal disease, but certain people are at increased risk including teens and young adults 16 – 23 years old and those with certain medical conditions that affect the immune system.

The single best way to prevent meningococcal disease is to be vaccinated. The meningococcal ACWY (MenACWY) vaccine protects against four major strains of bacteria which cause meningococcal disease in the United States. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends a single dose of MenACWY vaccine at age 11 through 12 years with a booster dose given at age 16 years. Children are not routinely recommended to receive MenACWY vaccine prior to the recommended ages, unless they have certain underlying medical conditions which increase their risk of disease. The meningococcal B (MenB) vaccine protects against a fifth strain of meningococcal bacteria which causes meningococcal disease. Young adults aged 16 through 23 years may be vaccinated with MenB vaccine and should discuss the MenB vaccine with a healthcare provider.

I encourage you to carefully review the attached Meningococcal Disease Fact Sheet. It is also available on the New York State Department of Health website at: <http://www.health.ny.gov/publications/2168.pdf>.

Information about the availability and cost of meningococcal vaccine can be obtained from your healthcare provider or your local health department.

Camp Ma-He-Tu is required to maintain a record for each camper, signed by the camper's parent or guardian, which documents the following:

- Receipt and review of meningococcal disease and vaccine information; AND EITHER
- Certification that the camper has been immunized against meningococcal meningitis within the past 10 years; OR
- An understanding of meningococcal disease risks and benefits of vaccination at the recommended ages and the decision not to obtain immunization against meningococcal meningitis at this time.

Please complete the [Vaccine Response Form](#) and send it with all other required forms prior to the session start date to the Camp Ma-He-Tu Registrar.

To learn more about meningococcal meningitis and the vaccine, please consult your child's physician. You can also find information about the disease at the website of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: [www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vpd-vac/mening/default.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vpd-vac/mening/default.htm).

Sincerely,  
Marion Schumacher  
Registrar  
Camp Ma-He-Tu