

Dear Parent/Guardians:

Schools are required to provide meningococcal and HPV vaccine information to parents and students in grades 6-12. The following is for your information to discuss with your health care provider to decide if you want to provide these vaccines for your student. *The vaccines are NOT required for school attendance.*

MENINGOCOCCAL vaccine

Meningococcal disease is a serious infection of the brain (meningitis) and blood caused by bacteria. Fortunately, this life-threatening infection is rare -- only about 75 people are infected each year in Washington. Adolescents and young adults are most likely to get meningococcal disease, especially those living in group settings such as college dorms. *Ask your child's health care provider if this vaccine is right for your child.*

Some ways to prevent the spread of meningococcal disease:

- Practice good hygiene (regular hand washing, covering coughs and sneezes, etc.)
- Do not share items that may spread meningococcal disease and other bacteria and viruses, such as eating utensils, glasses, cups, water bottles, drinks, lip gloss or toothbrushes.

Signs of the disease are high fever, headache, and stiff neck. Other symptoms may include nausea, vomiting, discomfort looking into bright lights, confusion, and sleepiness. As the disease progresses, seizures may occur.

The meningococcal vaccine is recommended for:

- all children at their routine preadolescent visit (11 to 12 years of age)
- or at high school entry
- college freshmen living in dormitories

Website resources:

- Washington State Department of Health Immunization Program:
<http://www.doh.wa.gov/YouandYourFamily/Immunizations/Vaccines/MeningococcalVaccine.aspx>
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:
<http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/pubs/vis/downloads/vis-mening.pdf>

HPV vaccine

What is Human Papillomavirus (HPV)?

HPV is the virus that causes genital warts and most cervical cancers. HPV is a very common virus that is spread through sexual contact. At least 50 percent of sexually active people will get HPV at some time in their lives. Both women and men can get HPV and easily spread it to others without knowing they have it.

What is the HPV vaccine?

HPV vaccines are given as three shots to protect against HPV infection and HPV-related diseases. Two vaccines (Cervarix and Gardasil) have been shown to protect against most cervical cancers in women. One vaccine (Gardasil) also protects against genital warts. Both vaccines are available for females. Only Gardasil is available for males. HPV vaccines offer the greatest health benefits to individuals who receive all three doses before having any type of sexual activity. The vaccine also does not protect against any type of HPV that someone already has.

Who should get the vaccine and when should they get it?

The HPV vaccine is recommended for all girls and boys 11-12 years of age. The vaccine may be given as young as nine and up to age 26 years. HPV vaccine is given as a series of three shots over a six month period. HPV vaccine is NOT required for school entry in Washington.

Are Pap tests still recommended for females that get the HPV vaccine?

Yes. The HPV vaccine does not protect against all of the types of HPV that can cause cervical cancer, so females will still need Pap tests. The first Pap test is recommended to start at age 21.

Where can I find the HPV vaccine?

Ask your doctor, nurse, or local health clinic to find out more about the HPV vaccine and where you can get it. In Washington, the vaccine is available at no-cost for all children through age 18 as part of the state Childhood Vaccine Program. Health care providers may charge an administration or office visit fee.

For more information on HPV, the vaccine, and cervical cancer, check the following websites:

Centers for Disease Control & Prevention: www.cdc.gov/std/hpv

American Cancer Society: <http://www.cancer.org/Cancer/News/ExpertVoices/category/Cervical-Cancer.aspx>

Sincerely,

Laura Brumfield, RN
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