

SCHOOL DISTRICT OF COLBY HEALTH SERVICES

Kelly C Meyer, RN, BSN

MENINGITIS LETTER FOR PARENTS 2024-2025 SCHOOL YEAR

Dear Parent or Guardian:

As registered nurse in the School District of Colby, I am writing to inform you about Meningococcal disease. Meningococcal disease is very serious and can be deadly in a matter of hours. It's important to get medical attention right away. Even with treatment, 10-15 out of every 100 people with meningococcal disease will die. Up to 1 in every 5 survivors will have long-term disabilities that can include brain damage, deafness, loss of limbs, or nervous system problems.

There are two types of meningitis. There is meningitis that is caused by the bacteria *Neisseria meningitidis* where the bacteria infects the lining of the brain and spinal cord and cause swelling. This is called meningococcal meningitis. The most common symptoms include fever, headache, and stiff neck. Often there are other symptoms like nausea, vomiting, eyes being more sensitive to light, and confusion. The second kind of meningitis is when septicemia (a blood stream infection) is caused by the same bacteria, but it enters the blood stream and damages the blood vessels which causes bleeding into the skin and organs. This is called meningococcal septicemia. Symptoms of this type are fever and chills, fatigue, vomiting, cold hands and feet, severe aches or pain in the muscles, joints, chest or belly, rapid breathing, diarrhea and in the later stages, a dark purple rash.

About 1 in 10 people carry meningococcal bacteria in their nose and throat, but don't get sick. These people are known as carriers. Although carriers don't have any signs or symptoms, they can still spread the bacteria and make others sick.

Meningococcal bacteria are spread from person to person through saliva or spit, for example, when coughing or kissing. The bacteria can spread to people who've had close or lengthy contact with someone who has meningococcal disease. Close contact also includes sharing items that come in contact with the mouth (water bottles, eating utensils, lip balm, cigarettes and smoking materials).

People don't catch the bacteria through casual contact or by breathing air where someone with meningococcal disease have been. Sometimes the bacteria can spread to people who spend a long time in the same space together, such as roommates.

Anyone can get meningococcal disease, but some people are at higher risk. Infants, preteens, teens, and young adults have the highest rate of meningococcal invasive disease in the United States.

How can we prevent meningococcal disease?

The best protection is to stay up to date with the recommended vaccines for meningococcal disease.

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There are two types of meningococcal vaccines:

- The MenACWY vaccine prevents infection with meningococcal types A, C, W, and Y.
 - The CDC recommends MenACWY for:
 - All preteens at 11-12 years old.
 - Booster shot for all teens at 16 years old.
 - This vaccine is also called MCV4.
- The MenB vaccine prevents infection with meningococcal type B.
 - The CDC recommends a MenB vaccine for people ages 16-23 years old.
 - Multiple doses of MenB are needed for the best protection. Brand names for MenB vaccine differ by manufacturer. All doses need to be from the same brand of vaccine.

Resources – please click on link for more information.

- [CDC disease overview—Meningococcal Disease](#)
- [DHS disease overview—Meningococcal Disease](#)
- [CDC vaccine information statement—Meningococcal ACWY](#)
- [CDC vaccine information statement—Meningococcal B](#)
- [Immunization Action Coalition—Meningococcal Vaccine Recommendations by Age and Risk Factor for Serogroups A, C, W, or Y \(PDF\)](#)
- [Immunization Action Coalition—Meningococcal Vaccine Recommendations by Age and Risk Factor for Serogroup B \(PDF\)](#)
- [CDC—Vaccine safety](#)

Sincerely,
Kelly Meyer, RN, BSN
Student Health Services
School District of Colby