

# VOICES OF MENINGITIS™

A Meningococcal Disease Prevention Campaign  
from the National Association of School Nurses

In collaboration with sanofi pasteur

Dear Parent:

As your child's school nurse, I am writing to inform you about meningococcal disease, which includes meningitis. Meningococcal meningitis may be rare, but it's often devastating. It can take the life of a child in just a single day.

Anyone can get meningitis, but preteens and teens are at greater risk than other age groups. In fact, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and other leading medical groups recommend meningococcal vaccination for preteens and teens 11 through 18 years of age and college freshmen living in dormitories to help protect them from the disease.

Meningococcal meningitis can be spread from one person to another through common everyday activities. This includes sharing eating utensils and drinking glasses, living in close quarters such as summer camps or dormitories, and kissing. Prevention is particularly important because the disease moves quickly and can be difficult to recognize, especially in its early stages, as symptoms are similar to those of the flu.

School nurses across the country have joined with families personally affected by meningitis to help educate parents about the disease and the importance of vaccination through the *Voices of Meningitis* campaign.

I am lending my "voice" to this campaign and urging you to help protect your preteen and teenage children by having them vaccinated. Vaccination has been available for years as a safe and effective way to help protect against the disease. The cost of the vaccine is covered by most health insurance or you can contact your local public health department to determine if your child is eligible to receive the vaccine free of charge through programs like the Vaccines for Children Program. Every health-care visit is an opportunity to talk to your child's health-care provider about vaccination.

For more information about meningococcal meningitis and vaccination, please call or visit my office, or go to [www.VoicesOfMeningitis.org](http://www.VoicesOfMeningitis.org).

Sincerely,

**Brenda Ogden, RN**  
**School Nurse**

**(918) 453-5400 or 1-888-Go-SHS-Go (1-888-467-4746)**

MKT19220-1

[VoicesOfMeningitis.org](http://VoicesOfMeningitis.org)



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## Get the Facts

### What is meningococcal meningitis?

Meningococcal disease, which includes meningitis, is a serious bacterial infection that strikes between 1000 to 2600 Americans each year. Although rare, meningococcal disease can cause meningitis (swelling of the brain or spinal cord) or meningococemia (blood infection). Vaccination is a safe and effective way to help protect preteens and teens from this potentially devastating disease.

### Who is at risk for getting meningococcal meningitis?

Preteens and teens are at greater risk for getting meningococcal meningitis and are more likely to die compared with other age groups. Death rates from meningococcal meningitis are up to 5 times higher in teenagers and young adults (15 through 24 years of age) compared with other age groups.

### How do you get meningococcal meningitis?

Meningococcal bacteria are spread from person to person through close contact. Common everyday activities (eg, sharing drinking glasses, eating utensils, kissing, or living in close quarters) can put even healthy preteens and teens at greater risk for getting meningitis. That's why vaccination is so important.

### What are symptoms of meningococcal meningitis?

Meningococcal meningitis can be hard to recognize, especially in its early stages, because symptoms are similar to those of more common viral illnesses. But unlike more common illnesses, the disease can progress quickly and may cause death within 24 hours. Symptoms may include high fever, severe headache, stiff neck, confusion, vomiting, exhaustion, and/or a rash.

### What can happen if you get meningococcal meningitis?

Although rare, meningococcal meningitis is serious and can potentially cause death of an otherwise healthy young person within 24 hours. About 10 percent of people who get meningococcal meningitis will die. Up to 1 in 5 survivors are left with serious medical problems, including:

- Amputation of arms, legs, fingers, and toes
- Brain damage
- Deafness
- Kidney damage

### How can you help prevent your child from developing meningococcal meningitis?

Vaccination is safe and effective and the best way to help protect preteens and teens from meningococcal meningitis. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and other leading medical groups recommend meningococcal vaccine for:

- Preteens and teens 11 through 18 years of age
- College freshmen living in dormitories
- Children 2 through 10 years of age who are at increased risk or if elected by their health-care providers and parents

A vaccine is available for people 2 through 55 years of age who wish to reduce their risk for contracting the disease.

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Every health-care visit is an opportunity to talk to your child's health-care provider about vaccination for meningitis and other diseases.

Ask your child's school nurse about meningitis prevention or call your health-care provider to schedule a vaccination appointment.

Visit [VoicesOfMeningitis.org](http://VoicesOfMeningitis.org) for more information about meningococcal meningitis and vaccination.