



# SCHOOL DISTRICT OF WESTFIELD

Dear Parent or Guardian:

As the nurse for the School District of Westfield, I am writing to inform you about the dangers of meningococcal disease.

Meningococcal disease is caused by bacteria called *Neisseria meningitidis*, also known as meningococcus. Meningococcal bacteria can be transmitted through close contact with an infected person through direct contact with respiratory and/or oral secretions from an infected person (for example, through sharing drinking containers or kissing).

Infants less than one year old and adolescents age 16 through 23 years old have higher rates of meningococcal disease than other age groups.

Meningococcal disease can be misdiagnosed as something less serious because early symptoms such as high fever, severe headache, nausea, vomiting, and stiff neck, are similar to those of common viral illnesses. Illnesses caused by meningococcus include meningitis (infections of the lining of the brain and spinal cord) and bacteremia or septicemia (infections of the bloodstream). Meningococcal disease can progress rapidly and can cause death or permanent disability; therefore, prompt medical attention is very important.

The most effective way to prevent this disease is by getting vaccinated. There are two types of meningococcal vaccines licensed in the U.S. - Meningococcal conjugate vaccines (MenACWY) and Serogroup B meningococcal vaccines (MenB). These vaccines help prevent the most common causes of meningococcal disease in the U.S. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends MenACWY vaccination at ages 11-12 and a booster at age 16; and MenB vaccination at ages 16-23.

Please review the fact sheet from the Wisconsin Department of Health Services for more information on this disease: <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/publications/p4/p42072.pdf>

Please contact your child's health care provider to help you decide if your child should receive this vaccination.