

ONEIDA COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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Prevention of Meningococcal Disease

As a follow up to news on a student from a local college campus becoming ill with bacterial meningitis, Oneida County Health Department would like to share some information on meningococcal disease, how it is spread, and how it can be prevented.

Bacterial meningococcal disease is a serious illness caused by a type of bacteria called *Neisseria meningitidis*. It can lead to meningitis (infection of the lining of the brain and spinal cord) and infections of the blood. Meningococcal disease often occurs without warning, even among people who are otherwise healthy. Meningococcal disease can easily be spread from person to person through close contact by coughing, sharing beverages or eating utensils, kissing, or spending time in close contact with someone who is sick or who carries the bacteria. Those who live in close quarters such as college students in dorms or teens at camps are at increased risk. People can spread the bacteria that causes meningococcal disease even before they know they are sick. There are at least 12 types of *Neisseria meningitidis*, called "serogroups." Serogroups A, B, C, W, and Y cause most meningococcal disease.

The single best way to prevent meningococcal disease is to be vaccinated. Vaccines are available that can help prevent meningococcal disease. There are two types of meningococcal vaccines available in the United States: Meningococcal conjugate vaccines (Menactra[®] and Menveo[®]) and Serogroup B meningococcal vaccines (Bexsero[®] and Trumenba[®]). The meningococcal conjugate vaccine protects against four major strains of bacteria which cause about two-thirds of meningococcal disease in the United States. The Serogroup B meningococcal vaccine (MenB) protects against a fifth type of meningococcal disease, which accounts for about one-third of cases in the U.S.

As of September 2016, all students in New York State must be vaccinated against meningococcal disease (types A, C, W, and Y), at 11 to 12 years old, and receive a booster dose at age 16 years. Teens and young adults also may be vaccinated with a serogroup B meningococcal vaccine. In certain situations, the vaccine may be recommended for other children and adults. Talk with your or your child's healthcare professional if you have questions about meningococcal vaccines.

For questions or concerns, contact the Oneida County Health Department clinic at 315-798-5747.

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