



CAMAS SCHOOL DISTRICT
A TRADITION OF CARING AND QUALITY

1919 NE IONE STREET
CAMAS, WA 98607-1145
WWW.CAMAS.WEDNET.EDU
TEL 360.833.5400
FAX 360.833.5401

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Dear Parents/Guardians:

As of July 2005 the Washington State Legislature passed a law (RCW 28A.210.080 adding section 2) requiring schools to provide meningococcal information to parents/guardians of students beginning with sixth grade entry.

Meningococcal disease is a rare but sometimes deadly bacterial disease which invades the lining surrounding the brain, (meninges). It is called meningococcal septicemia or meningococemia when it enters the blood stream, destroying organs and tissue in a matter of hours. Nearly one-third of the 2,000 to 3,000 annual cases in the United States result in fatalities or severe disabilities such as limb amputations and organ damage.

The highest incidence of meningococcal disease occurs in infants less than 1 year of age. Adolescents and young adults have an increased rate of contracting meningococcal disease, especially those living in group settings such as college dormitories. Although adolescents are less likely to be infected than infants, they are more likely to die when infected – one out of four cases among adolescents will result in death.

The Department of Health wants you to be aware of meningococcal meningitis and the availability of a vaccine to protect against the disease. The vaccine protects against four of the five types of meningococcal disease, and up to 83 percent of cases among adolescents and young adults are potentially vaccine-preventable. There is currently a national shortage of the vaccine, but starting July 2006, the Department of Health will again be supplying the vaccine. College freshmen who will be living in dorms have the highest priority for the limited vaccine supply. Talk with your child's doctor about the need for meningococcal vaccine for your child. Even if the vaccine is recommended, it is not required for school or college attendance.

Please also be aware of meningococcal disease and how your child may prevent it. The disease is spread through air droplets and direct contact with someone who is infected. That includes coughing, kissing, and sharing cigarettes, utensils, cups, or lip balm. Talk to your children about good hygiene (regular hand washing, covering coughs and sneezes, etc.) and warn them not to share items that may spread meningococcal disease and other bacteria and viruses: eating utensils, glasses, cups, water bottles, lip gloss or toothbrushes.

We encourage you to learn more about meningococcal disease and how to prevent it. More information on meningococcal disease is available on the following web sites:

- **Washington State Department of Health Immunization Program**
Meningococcal vaccine information: www.doh.wa.gov/cfh/immunize/meningococcal.htm
- **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention**
Meningococcal vaccine information: www.cdc.gov/nip/publications/vis/vis-mening.pdf
- **Children's Hospital of Philadelphia Vaccine Education Center**
Meningococcal Questions & Answers: www.chop.edu/vaccine/images/vec_mening_tear.pdf
- **National meningitis Association**
Parent & Teacher Awareness Program: www.nmaus.org/programs/pta/index.htm

Sincerely,

Camas School District
School Health and Nursing Services