



[COPY ONTO YOUR PTA'S OR SCHOOL'S LETTERHEAD]

SAMPLE PRESS RELEASE

[INSERT SCHOOL] PTA WARNS PARENTS AND STUDENTS ABOUT THE DANGERS OF MENINGOCOCCAL MENINGITIS

New immunization recommendations target all adolescents

Adolescents and young adults are at increased risk for a potentially deadly bacterial infection called meningococcal disease. Although the disease is rare, it can be very serious, causing death or permanent disability within hours. The [INSERT SCHOOL] PTA is working with the National Meningitis Association (NMA) in an effort to alert others to the dangers of this serious illness, and what can be done to prevent the disease, including the availability and benefits of immunization.

Immunization Recommendations

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends meningococcal vaccination for all adolescents 11 through 18 years of age.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration approved a new meningococcal conjugate vaccine for use among persons aged 11 to 55 years, which is expected to provide long-term protection against meningococcal disease.

About Meningococcal Meningitis

Meningococcal disease, commonly known as meningitis, is a bacterial infection that strikes up to 3,000 Americans each year. Nearly 30 percent of all cases in the U.S. occur among adolescents and young adults. According to one study, as many as one in four adolescents infected with the disease may die. Of those who survive, nearly 20 percent endure long-term disabilities including brain damage, hearing loss, kidney disease and limb amputations.

However, the majority of cases among adolescents and young adults may potentially be prevented through vaccination. Immunization is the most effective means of preventing the disease.

Meningococcal disease is spread by respiratory secretions and direct contact, such as coughing or kissing. Research shows certain lifestyle factors, common among adolescents and young adults, appear to be linked to the disease. These factors include:

- Crowded living conditions (such as dormitories, boarding schools and sleep-away camps)
- Moving to a new residence
- Attending a new school or camp with students from geographically diverse areas
- Active or passive smoking
- Irregular sleeping patterns

The disease is often misdiagnosed as something less serious because its early symptoms are similar to the flu. Symptoms may include high fever, severe headache, stiff neck, confusion, nausea, vomiting, exhaustion and sensitivity to light. Once the disease progresses, a rash may appear. If any of these symptoms are unusually sudden or severe, medical assistance should be sought immediately.

“[INSERT PTA NAME] wants to generate awareness among [INSERT TOWN/COMMUNITY] residents about the dangers of meningococcal disease and prevention approaches,” said [INSERT PTA PRESIDENT OR OTHER CONTACT]. “We urge parents to speak with their child’s physician about the disease and vaccination.”

About the [INSERT PTA NAME] and the National Meningitis Association (NMA)

[INSERT PTA NAME] is distributing additional information about meningococcal disease and the availability of immunization, in partnership with NMA, a nonprofit organization founded by parents of children who died or endure long-term disabilities from meningococcal disease.

NMA is dedicated to educating the public about the dangers of meningococcal disease and available prevention approaches. For more information about NMA, please visit their Web site at www.nmaus.org. Materials about meningococcal disease can be obtained by [calling/e-mailing INSERT CONTACT] from the [INSERT NAME OF PTA], or visiting [INSERT SCHOOL’S] Web site at [INSERT WEB SITE ADDRESS].

###