



County of Erie

MARK POLONCARZ
COUNTY EXECUTIVE

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

GALE R. BURSTEIN, MD, MPH, FAAP
COMMISSIONER OF HEALTH

Dear Parent of Graduating High School Student:

As Erie County Commissioner of Health, I am writing to make you aware of the risk of meningococcal disease (i.e., a potentially fatal bacterial infection and one of the causes of meningitis). More importantly, I would like to inform you of Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommendations to prevent this serious disease.

Meningococcal disease strikes 1,000-2,000 Americans each year and claims about 300 lives. Between 400 and 500 meningitis cases occur each year in adolescents and young adults and as many as 70 students will die from the disease.

Fortunately, a vaccine is available that can reduce the risk of infection by 85%. **The CDC's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) now recommends giving the quadrivalent meningococcal conjugate vaccine at age 11 or 12 followed by a booster at age 16 years. For those who miss the first dose, a catch up dose can be given at age 13 through 18 years. If the first dose is given at age 16 years or older only one dose is required.**

Adolescents ages 16 through 21 years have the highest rates of meningococcal disease. Colleges in New York State distribute information on meningitis and vaccination to students, and record receipt of the information and meningococcal vaccination status.

I think you will agree that the best way to treat any disease is to prevent it from ever occurring. Therefore, I strongly encourage you and your child to discuss vaccination with your child's health care provider. Pre-college examinations are just one opportunity to have this conversation. You can also find more information by visiting the CDC's website at <http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vpd-vac/mening/who-vaccinate.htm> or the New York State Department of Health website, www.health.state.ny.us.

Have a safe and healthy summer!

Sincerely,

Gale R. Burstein, M.D, MPH
Commissioner of Health
Erie County Department of Health