

As of July 2005, schools in Washington are required to make information available on Meningococcal diseases and reducing your student's risk of contracting HPV to parents or guardians of all students entering Grades 6-12.

Meningococcal disease is caused by a group of bacteria that lives in the nose and throat. These bacteria can cause the disease known as Meningococcal meningitis and can be fatal. Adolescents and young adults have an increased rate of contracting meningitis as compared to the general population. Symptoms of the disease may include fever, chills, rash, headaches, a stiff neck, and worsen into confusion and coma. The disease is spread through direct contact with infected material including kissing, coughing, sneezing, or sharing eating or drinking utensils. We urge you to talk to your children about good hygiene and not sharing personal items that may transmit the disease.

The Washington State Department of Health wants you to be aware of this illness and the availability of a vaccine to protect against meningitis. Vaccination can help protect against up to 83% of the meningitis diseases occurring among adolescents and young adults. While the vaccine is recommended for children entering middle school (ages 11-12) and high school (age 15), the vaccine can benefit all teenagers and young adults. **This vaccine is not required for school attendance.**

HPV is a common virus that is primarily spread through sexual contact. Up to 75 percent of HPV infections occur among people 15 thru 24 years old. Almost all cervical cancers and genital warts are caused by HPV. The types of HPV that can cause genital warts are not the same as the types that cause cancer. Some types of HPV can cause penile, anal, or head and neck cancers.

Most of the time infected individuals have no symptoms and can spread the virus unknowingly. Some people know they have HPV because they have a symptom like genital warts. Women may find out they have HPV through cervical cancer screening (Pap tests) and HPV testing. Health care providers do not usually test for HPV unless they find abnormal cervical cell changes in a Pap test.

The best way to prevent HPV infection is to abstain from all sexual activity. Even people with only one lifetime partner can get HPV if their partner had previous sexual partners. Using condoms during sex offers good protection against sexual infections like HPV. The HPV vaccines offer by far the best protection if given before sexual activity starts — they do not get rid of existing HPV infections. The HPV vaccine can prevent infections from some of the most common and serious types of HPV that cause warts, cervical and anal cancers.

Two HPV vaccines are available:

- HPV4—protects only against four common HPV types. Two types that cause 75 percent of cervical cancer in women, and most anal cancers in men. Two other types that cause most genital warts in females and males.
- HPV2—protects only against the two types of HPV that cause 75 percent of cervical cancer in women.

**Who should get the vaccine and when should they get it?**

The federal Advisory Committee on Immunization Practice recommends that all girls age 11 thru 12 years old should get vaccinated against HPV. Health care providers may also give the vaccine to girls as young as 9 years, and to girls and women aged 13 thru 26 years who haven't gotten the vaccine yet.

One of the HPV vaccines is also licensed for boys and men ages 9 thru 26 years to prevent genital warts. It is not yet recommended for all boys and men like it is for girls and women. Health care providers can offer the vaccine to males and give the vaccine upon request.

For both females and males, three doses are needed. The second dose should be given one to two months after the first. The third dose should be given six months after the first. **The HPV vaccine is not required for school in Washington.**

We encourage you to learn more about Meningococcal disease and Human Papillomavirus infection and to talk to your health care provider about immunization.. The following websites can provide additional information:

Washington State Dept. of Health Immunization Program:

[www.doh.wa.gov/YouandYourFamily/Immunization](http://www.doh.wa.gov/YouandYourFamily/Immunization)

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:

[www.cdc.gov/vaccines/pubs/vis/vis-statements/mening.html](http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/pubs/vis/vis-statements/mening.html)

American Social Health Association

[www.ashastd.org](http://www.ashastd.org)

American Cancer Society

[www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org)