

Meningitis and The College Setting

Dear Parents and Students:

Hobart and William Smith Colleges along with the Hubbs Health Center would like to inform you about meningococcal disease, a potentially fatal bacterial infection commonly referred to as meningitis. New York State Public Health Law (NYS PHL) §2167 requires institutions, including colleges and universities, to distribute information about meningococcal disease and vaccine to all students meeting the enrollment criteria, whether they live on or off campus.

Meningococcal disease is rare. However, when it strikes, its flulike symptoms make diagnosis difficult. Meningococcal disease can cause serious illness such as infection of the lining of the brain and spinal column (meningitis) or blood infections (sepsis). The disease strikes quickly and can lead to severe and permanent disabilities, such as hearing loss, brain damage, seizures, limb amputation and even death.

Meningococcal disease can be easily spread from person-to-person by coughing, sharing beverages or eating utensils, kissing, or spending time in close contact with someone who is sick or who carries the bacteria. People can spread the bacteria that causes meningococcal disease even before they know they are sick. There have been several outbreaks of meningococcal disease at college campuses across the United States. Please carefully review the attached Meningococcal Disease Fact Sheet. It is also available on the New York State Department of Health website at www.health.ny.gov/publications/2168.pdf.

The single best way to prevent meningococcal disease is to be vaccinated.

The meningococcal ACWY (MenACWY) vaccine protects against four major strains of bacteria which cause meningococcal disease in the United States. The MenACWY vaccine is recommended for all teenagers and young adults up to age 21 years. Protection from the MenACWY vaccine is estimated to last about 3 to 5 years, so young adults who received the MenACWY vaccine before their 16th birthday should get a booster dose before entering college. A separate vaccine known as meningococcal B (MenB) vaccine protects against a fifth strain of meningococcal bacteria which also causes meningococcal disease. Young adults aged 16 through 23 years may choose to receive the MenB vaccine 2 or 3 dose series and should discuss the MenB vaccine with a healthcare provider.

All private insurance plans not grandfathered under the Affordable Care Act are required to cover the cost of MenACWY and MenB vaccines. Contact your health insurance plan to determine whether it covers MenACWY and MenB vaccines. The federal Vaccines for Children (VFC) and NYS Vaccines for Adults (VFA) programs will cover both MenACWY and MenB vaccines for children and adults who have no health insurance or whose health insurance does not cover these vaccines, as well as for children less than 19 years of age who are American Indian or Alaska Native or eligible for Medicaid or Child Health Plus.

The Hubbs Health Center on campus can provide your student with a prescription for the vaccine. The prescription can be brought to any local pharmacy to have the vaccine administered.

Hobart and William Smith Colleges are required to maintain a record for each student, signed by the student or student's parent or guardian, which documents the following:

- Receipt and review of meningococcal disease and vaccine information;

- AND EITHER
- A record of meningococcal immunization within the past 5 years;
- OR**
- An understanding of meningococcal disease risks and benefits of vaccination at the recommended ages and the decision not to obtain immunization against meningococcal disease at this time.

Please complete the Meningococcal Vaccination Response Form and return it to:

Hubbs Health Center

Fax: 315-781-3802 or by Email: Hubbs@hws.edu

PER PUBLIC HEALTH LAW, NO INSTITUTION SHOULD PERMIT ANY STUDENT TO ATTEND THE INSTITUTION IN EXCESS OF 30 DAYS WITHOUT COMPLYING WITH THIS LAW.

To learn more about meningococcal disease and the vaccine, please feel free to The Hubbs Health Center (315-781-3600) and/or consult your child's physician. You can also find information about the disease on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website at www.cdc.gov/meningococcal/.