

**Toppenish School District #202**

Important Information about a serious illness:  
**Meningococcal Meningitis**

Dear Parent, Guardian and Students,

As of July 2005, school are required to provide meningococcal information to students 6<sup>th</sup> grade and older, and their parents. Vaccination is not required for school attendance.

**What is Meningococcal Meningitis??**

It is an infections cause by a germ carried only by humans in the nose and throat. Up to 10 percent of adolescents and young adults carry the disease but never get it.

**Who gets Meningococcal Meningitis??**

Young people are particularly susceptible to this illness, which can be fatal to a fourth of adolescents infected with the disease. Survivors may suffer long-term disabilities, including brain damage, hearing loss, kidney disease and limb amputations.

**How do you get Meningococcal Meningitis??**

The disease is spread through air droplets, saliva and direct contact with someone who is sick or a carrier. This includes sneezing, coughing, kissing or sharing anything an infected person has touched with their mouth. It spreads quickly and within hours of the first symptoms, it can cause the serious problems described above.

**What are the symptoms of Meningococcal Meningitis??**

Beginning signs are much like the flu with a severe headache. Symptoms include sudden high fever, extreme headache, stiff neck, sore throat, sensitivity to light, confusion, nausea, vomiting, and extreme tiredness. Students are urged to seek medical care immediately if they experience two or more of these symptoms together, or if the symptoms are unusually sudden or severe.

**Prevention:**

The Department of Health wants you to be aware of this disease, and that there is a **vaccine** available to protect against getting it. **Vaccination** can help protect against up to 83% of the meningococcal disease cases occurring among adolescents and young adults. The Centers for Disease Prevention recommend that all 11-12 year olds and those entering high school or college be vaccinated. Also, speak to your children about good hygiene and not sharing personal items (food, cups, lip gloss, etc.) that could spread the disease.

The Toppenish School District web site [www.toppenish.wednet.edu](http://www.toppenish.wednet.edu) lists other sources where you can find more information.

Sincerely,

Susan Vlahakis, RN  
School Nurse