

Meningitis letter

Dear Parent(s):

I am writing to inform you about meningococcal disease, a potentially fatal bacterial infection commonly referred to as meningitis, and a new law in New York State. On July 22, 2003, the New York State Public Health Law (NYS PHL) was amended to include §2167 requiring overnight children's camps to distribute information about meningococcal disease and vaccinations to the parents or guardians of all campers attend camp for 7 or more nights. This law became effective on August 15, 2003.

Camp Chateaugay is required to maintain a record of the following for each camper:

- A response to receipt of meningococcal meningitis disease and vaccine information signed by the camper's parent or guardian; AND
- Information on the availability and cost of meningococcal meningitis vaccine (Menomune™) ; AND EITHER
- A record of meningococcal meningitis immunization within the past 10 years; OR
- An acknowledgement of meningococcal meningitis disease risks and refusal of meningococcal meningitis immunization signed by the camper's parent or guardian.

Meningitis is rare. However, when it strikes, its flu-like symptoms make diagnosis difficult. If not treated early, meningitis can lead to swelling of the fluid surrounding the brain and spinal column as well as severe and permanent disabilities, such as hearing loss, brain damage, seizures, limb amputations and even death.

Cases of meningitis among teens and young adults 15 to 24 years of age have more than doubled since 1991. The disease strikes about 3,000 Americans each year and claims about 300 lives.

A vaccine is available that protects against four types of the bacteria that cause meningitis in the United States – (serogroup A, C, Y, and W-135.) These types account for nearly two thirds of meningitis cases among teens and young adults.

Information about the availability and cost of the vaccine can be obtained from your health care provider and by visiting the manufacturer's website at <http://www.meningococcaldisease.com/> .

I encourage you to carefully review the enclosed materials. Please complete the Meningococcal Vaccination Response Form and return it when you come to camp. To learn more about meningitis and the vaccine, please feel free to consult your child's physician. You can also find information about the disease at the New York Department of Health website:

WWW.HEALTH.STATE.NY.US, or at <http://www.health.state.ny.us/diseases/communicable/meningococcal.htm> and at the website of the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), WWW.CDC.GOV/NCIDOD/DBMD/DISEASEINFO .

Sincerely,

Hal Lyons - Owner