



NORTH HEALTH DISTRICT

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AGE RECOMMENDATION FOR MENINGOCOCCAL VACCINE EXPANDED

GAINESVILLE – Recent emphasis on meningococcal vaccine for college students may have led people to think that the illness is a problem only on college campuses. While it continues to be a problem on college campuses, the truth is that anyone can get it. Surprisingly, meningococcal disease is also a threat for individuals in the adolescent age group. That's right, pre-teens (11-12), as well as, teenagers are at increased risk from this serious and potentially deadly infection.

But there is good news. The eligibility requirements for getting the vaccine through the *Vaccines For Children* (VFC) program in Georgia have been expanded. Parents should ensure their child's (children's) immunizations are up-to-date before entering middle and high school, before entering college or at college age if the child is not attending college, and during visits to the doctor. If you have questions about the meningococcal vaccine or want more information, ask your health care provider or local health department.

Meningococcal disease is a potentially deadly infectious disease that affects children, adolescents and young adults and strikes between 2,500 and 3,000 Americans every year. It can cause meningitis – severe swelling of the brain and spinal cord. It can also lead to sepsis – a dangerous and potentially life-threatening blood infection.

Symptoms for meningococcal disease include: headache, fever, stiff neck, extreme fatigue, vomiting, sensitivity to light, and a rash of small purplish black-red dots.

Meningococcal vaccine is also recommended for persons at increased risk for the disease:

- College freshmen living in dormitories
- Microbiologists who are routinely exposed to meningococcal bacteria
- U.S. Military recruits



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- Anyone traveling to or living in a country where meningococcal disease is common
- Anyone who has terminal complement component deficiency (an immune disorder)
- People who might have been exposed to meningitis during an outbreak

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