

Dear Student/Parent:

As the Interim Medical Director at Ithaca College, I am writing to inform you about meningococcal disease, a potentially fatal bacterial infection commonly referred to as meningitis. I am also writing to advise you that **Hammond Health Center of Ithaca College strongly recommends that all students be fully vaccinated against meningococcal disease with both available vaccines.** 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.

Ithaca College is required to maintain a record of the following for each student:

- A response to receipt of meningococcal disease and vaccine information signed by the student (or student's parent or guardian if under 18)
AND EITHER
- A record of meningococcal immunization within the past 5 years; OR
- An acknowledgement of meningococcal disease risks and refusal of meningococcal immunization signed by the student or student's parent or guardian.

Meningococcal disease is rare. However, when it strikes, its flu-like symptoms make diagnosis difficult. Meningococcal disease can cause serious illnesses 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 lead to 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.

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 about two-thirds of meningococcal disease in the United States (U.S.). The MenACWY vaccine is recommended for all U.S. 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. The meningococcal B (MenB) vaccine protects against a fifth type of meningococcal disease, which accounts for about one-third of cases in the U.S. Young adults aged 16 through 23 years may choose to receive the MenB vaccine series. They should discuss the MenB vaccine with a healthcare provider.

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.

Ithaca College offers both the MenACWY and MenB vaccines. Please verify with your insurance plan if they will reimburse you for the cost of the vaccine if you receive it at the Hammond Health Center. 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. **Please complete the Meningococcal Vaccination Response Form and return it by the indicated date.**

To learn more about meningococcal disease and the vaccine, please feel free to contact our health service and/or consult your physician. You can also find information about the disease at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website at www.cdc.gov/meningococcal/.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Metzgar, NP
Director of Student Health
Services

Attachment: [New York State Department of Health Meningococcal Disease Fact Sheet](#)