



# THE CITY OF NEW YORK

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND MENTAL HYGIENE

Michael R. Bloomberg  
Mayor

Thomas R. Frieden, M.D., M.P.H.  
Commissioner

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nyc.gov/health

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Dear Colleague:

On July 22, 2003, the New York State Public Health Law (NYS PHL) was amended to include section 2167, one part of which requires children's overnight camps to inform parents or guardians of campers about meningococcal meningitis (also called meningococcal disease). This law applies to all campers who remain overnight for seven or more nights. This letter is being sent to provide you with information to answer questions you may receive as parents come to your office with questions.

The law requires that parents or guardians of campers attending children's overnight camps for seven or more nights be provided with information that includes:

- A description of meningococcal disease and its transmission,
- The benefits, risks and effectiveness of immunization, and
- The availability and estimated cost of immunization (and whether or not the camp itself offers the vaccine).

The law does not require that a child receive meningococcal vaccination, only that the parents/guardians complete the required form and return it to the camp (the form indicates that the child either received vaccine or that the family did not wish such vaccine). Children may attend camp without receiving meningococcal vaccine.

Each year, there are about 2,500 to 3,000 cases of meningococcal disease in the United States. Infants <12 months have the highest rate of meningococcal disease. The incidence of disease then declines in early childhood, increases slightly during adolescence and early adulthood, and declines among older adults. The proportion of cases among adolescents and young adults has increased in recent years. During 1992-1998, 28% of reported cases were 12-29 years of age. Risk factors for the development of meningococcal disease include deficiencies in the terminal complement pathway and functional or anatomic asplenia. Certain genetic factors (such as polymorphisms in the genes for mannose-binding lectin and tumor necrosis factor) may also be risk factors. For more information about meningococcal disease see [www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dbmd/diseaseinfo/meningococcal\\_g.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dbmd/diseaseinfo/meningococcal_g.htm) and [www.cdc.gov/nip/publications/pink/mening.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/nip/publications/pink/mening.pdf). There is no evidence that suggests that attending summer camp places children at any increased risk of meningococcal disease.

The New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene does not provide meningococcal vaccine. It is not available at any of the Immunization Walk-In Clinics. There is no public purchase of the vaccine; it is not available through the Vaccines for Children Program. Vaccine can be ordered through the manufacturer, Aventis Pasteur, at 1-800-822-2463. For professional or technical information please call the Bureau of Immunization at 212-676-2259.

Sincerely,

*Stephen Friedman, MD MPH*

Stephen Friedman, M.D., M.P.H.  
Assistant Commissioner  
Bureau of Immunization

Join us: April 22, 2004 - All day immunization conference to "Kick Off" National Infant Immunization Week. Go to [www.nyam.org/events](http://www.nyam.org/events) for information and to register for this event. CME/CNE available. No charge.