



*Southwoods*

## IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR SOUTHWOODS PARENTS

Dear Parents,

Southwoods is providing the following information to you at the request of the New York State Department of Health. In August 2003 a law became effective requiring overnight children's camps to distribute this information concerning meningococcal disease (meningitis) and its vaccination to the parents and guardians of all campers who attend camp for 7 or more nights.

Meningitis is rare. However, when it strikes, its flu-like symptoms make diagnosis difficult. Additional information regarding the meningococcal disease can be found in the Fact Sheet on the reverse of this paper.

Southwoods is required to maintain a record of the following for each camper.

- Your response to receipt of meningococcal meningitis disease and vaccine information signed by you, the camper's parent or guardian; AND
- Information on the availability and cost of meningococcal meningitis vaccine (Menomune™).

We also need 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.

In order for us to comply with this request **we must have you sign and return the enclosed Meningococcal Meningitis Vaccination Response Form, located in the health packet.** As stated in the bullet points above, we simply need to know that you are aware of meningococcal meningitis. Based on that knowledge we need documentation of your decision to either seek out the vaccination or not to obtain the vaccination. If you have any questions at all please give us a call at (914) 214-8780.

Thanks for your prompt response to this letter.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Andrea &amp; Scott".

Andrea & Scott Ralls

## **Meningococcal Disease**

### ***Information for College Students and Parents of Children at Residential Schools and Overnight Camps***

#### **What is meningococcal disease?**

Meningococcal disease is a severe bacterial infection of the bloodstream or meninges (a thin lining covering the brain and spinal cord).

#### **Who gets meningococcal disease?**

Anyone can get meningococcal disease, but it is more common in infants and children. For some college students, such as freshmen living in dormitories, there is an increased risk of meningococcal disease. Between 100 and 125 cases of meningococcal disease occur on college campuses every year in the United States; between 5 and 15 college students die each year as result of infection. Currently, no data are available regarding whether children at overnight camps or residential schools are at the same increased risk for disease. However, these children can be in settings similar to college freshmen living in dormitories. Other persons at increased risk include household contacts of a person known to have had this disease, and people traveling to parts of the world where meningitis is prevalent.

#### **How is the germ meningococcus spread?**

The meningococcus germ is spread by direct close contact with nose or throat discharges of an infected person. Many people carry this particular germ in their nose and throat without any signs of illness, while others may develop serious symptoms.

#### **What are the symptoms?**

High fever, headache, vomiting, stiff neck and a rash are symptoms of meningococcal disease. Among people who develop meningococcal disease, 10-15% die, in spite of treatment with antibiotics. Of those who live, permanent brain damage, hearing loss, kidney failure, loss of arms or legs, or chronic nervous system problems can occur.

#### **How soon do the symptoms appear?**

The symptoms may appear 2 to 10 days after exposure, but usually within 5 days.

#### **What is the treatment for meningococcal disease?**

Antibiotics, such as penicillin G or ceftriaxone, can be used to treat people with meningococcal disease.

#### **Is there a vaccine to prevent meningococcal meningitis?**

Yes, a safe and effective vaccine is available. The vaccine is 85% to 100% effective in preventing four kinds of bacteria (serogroups A, C, Y, W-135) that cause about 70% of the disease in the United States. The vaccine is safe, with mild and infrequent side effects, such as redness and pain at the injection site lasting up to 2 days. After vaccination, immunity develops within 7 to 10 days and remains effective for approximately 3 to 5 years. As with any vaccine, vaccination against meningitis may not protect 100% of all susceptible individuals.

#### **How do I get more information about meningococcal disease and vaccination?**

Contact your family physician or your student health service. Additional information is also available on the websites of the New York State Department of Health, [www.health.state.ny.us](http://www.health.state.ny.us); the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [www.cdc.gov/ncid/dbmd/diseaseinfo](http://www.cdc.gov/ncid/dbmd/diseaseinfo); and the American College Health Association, [www.acha.org](http://www.acha.org).