

Dear Parent:

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 vaccination to the parents or guardians of all campers who attend camp for 7 or more nights. This law became effective on August 15, 2003.

The Onteora Scout Reservation 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 amputation 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 - types 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 [www.meningitisvaccine.com](http://www.meningitisvaccine.com).

I encourage you to carefully review the enclosed materials. **Please complete the Meningococcal Vaccination Response Form and send it to camp with your child and his/her medical form.**

To learn more about meningitis and the vaccine, please consult your child's physician. You can also find information about the disease at the New York State Department of Health website: [WWW.HEALTH.STATE.NY.US](http://WWW.HEALTH.STATE.NY.US), and the website of the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC): [WWW.CDC.GOV/NCIDOD/DBMD/DISEASEINFO](http://WWW.CDC.GOV/NCIDOD/DBMD/DISEASEINFO).

Sincerely,

Matthew Conlon  
Council Director of Camping

Theodore Roosevelt Council

## ***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).

## MENINGOCOCCAL MENINGITIS VACCINATION RESPONSE FORM

New York State Public Health Law requires the operator of an overnight children's camp to maintain a completed response form for every camper who attends camp for seven (7) or more nights. Onteora Scout Reservation is requiring that every youth attending camp have this completed form with their medical form.

**Check one box and sign below.**

My child has had the meningococcal meningitis immunization (Menomune™) within the past 10 years. Date received:

[Note: The vaccine's protection lasts for approximately 3 to 5 years. Revaccination may be considered within 3-5 years.]

I have read, or have had explained to me, the information regarding meningococcal meningitis disease. I understand the risks of not receiving the vaccine. I have decided that my child will **not** obtain immunization against meningococcal meningitis disease.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Parent / Guardian)

Camper's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Birth : \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian's E-mail address (optional): \_\_\_\_\_