

Dear Parent/Guardian,

Meningitis Information

Indiana State Law IC 20-30-5-18 requires schools to provide information to parents and guardians of all students about meningitis and vaccines available to prevent one type of this serious illness.

One type of meningitis, caused by *Neisseria meningitides*, can lead to serious infections and possible death. Symptoms include high fever, headache, stiff neck, nausea, confusion, and a rash. It can spread through the air or by direct contact with saliva from a person infected with the disease.

There is a vaccine (Menactra) that can prevent most cases of meningitis in people age two years and older. The United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends vaccination against this disease for all children and adolescents 11-18 years of age.

Beginning with the 2010-2011 school year, one dose of Menactra will be required for students in grades 6-12. This is a new legal requirement (Indiana Administrative Code 410 IAC 1-1-1).

Pertussis Information

The Indiana Department of Health and Department of Education have asked schools to provide important information to parents and guardians of all students about pertussis (whooping cough) and the vaccines available to prevent this disease.

Pertussis is a highly contagious respiratory infection caused by *Bordetella pertussis*. It is spread by airborne droplets created when an infected person coughs or sneezes. Infants and young children are typically vaccinated against this disease, but the vaccine loses its effectiveness as children get older.

Pertussis causes severe coughing fits at which time the affected person may feel short of breath and appear distressed. This coughing fit may be followed by vomiting and exhaustion. Adolescents and young adults who have been previously vaccinated may have mild symptoms, but they can still spread pertussis to others. The United States CDC recommends a routine pertussis booster for all 11-12 year old children. The booster (Tdap) is combined with tetanus toxoid and takes the place of one tetanus booster shot. The Tdap vaccine can be given as soon as one year after a regular tetanus booster.

Beginning with the 2010-2011 school year, the Tdap vaccine will be required for all students in grades 6-12.

Contact your child's physician for additional information on vaccine availability and administration.

DeKalb County Eastern C.S.D. and the DeKalb County Health Department are attempting to arrange an immunization clinic at the school. Further information will follow as it becomes available. Additional resources for families regarding meningitis and pertussis disease include the following websites:

Indiana State Department of Health

<http://www.in.gov/isdh/22191.htm>

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

<http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vpd-vac/pertussis/default.htm>

<http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vpd-vac/mening/default.htm>