



American  
Academy of  
Pediatrics

## AAP ENDORSES NEW MENINGOCOCCAL VACCINE GUIDELINES

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CHICAGO -The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) has released a new policy statement recommending routine meningococcal vaccination for certain age groups. The guidelines call for the quadrivalent meningococcal vaccine (MCV4) for:

- Young adolescents (11-12 years of age)
- Adolescents at high school entry or 15 years of age (whichever comes first) for those who have not previously been vaccinated
- All college freshmen living in dormitories
- Other groups at high risk such as those with underlying medical conditions or travelers to areas with high rates of meningococcal disease

The recommendations will help prevent meningococcal disease, a potentially fatal bacterial infection. Although rare, meningococcal disease is dangerous because the disease progresses rapidly, and within hours of the onset of symptoms it may cause permanent disability or death.

Meningococcal disease is the most common cause of bacterial meningitis in U.S. toddlers, adolescents and young adults. Symptoms include high fever, headache, stiff neck, confusion, nausea, vomiting and exhaustion, and a rash may appear. Lifestyle factors thought to contribute to the disease include direct contact with an infected person, e.g., exchanging saliva, often through kissing; crowded living conditions, e.g., dormitories; and active or passive smoking. Vaccination is the best method of preventing meningococcal disease.

Meningococcal infections can be treated with drugs such as penicillin. "Still," says AAP President Carol Berkowitz, MD, FAAP, "about one in every ten people who get the disease dies from it, and many others are affected for life. That is why preventing the disease through use of meningococcal vaccine is important for the high-risk groups."

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) determined that establishing the target age at 11 years may give lasting immunity through college. Studies have determined that the disease peaks in 16- to 18-year-olds, supporting vaccination of 15-year-olds.

More information on the vaccine can be found at the AAP Web site at <http://www.aap.org> or from the CDC at <http://www.cdc.gov>

The American Academy of Pediatrics is an organization of 60,000 primary care pediatricians, pediatric medical subspecialists and pediatric surgical specialists dedicated to the health, safety and well being of infants, children, adolescents and young adults.