

As your healthcare provider, I recommend the Meningococcal vaccine...

Please **THINK TWICE** and vaccinate!!

Meningococcal disease is caused by a rare but deadly bacteria that causes meningitis (an infection in the covering of the brain and spinal cord) and septicemia (an infection of the blood).

Meningococcal disease can lead to serious outcomes including deafness, mental retardation, seizures, amputation of the arms and legs, or death.



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Photo used with permission of Nick Springer, meningitis survivor. See his story on back.

How is this bacteria spread?

Meningococcal bacteria is spread from person to person through lung secretions and saliva. It happens when we **cough, sneeze, kiss, or share cups, silverware, lip balm,** and other things we put our mouths on.

My 11 year old isn't kissing anyone! Why should I vaccinate her?

Kissing isn't the only way it's spread. Pre-teens and teens are at a higher risk of catching this disease because of their behaviors. The environment of middle and high school also means that there are a lot of kids in one place. **A sneeze can travel up to six feet** and meningococcal bacteria can travel with it, infecting anyone in it's path.

If this disease is rare then why should I worry about getting a vaccine for it?

This disease is rare, but it's deadly, that's why you should vaccinate your child. **When this disease strikes, it does it quickly and fiercely.** Once the bacteria get into someone's body, it can kill within hours. This is not something to mess around with and vaccination is the best protection.

But doesn't the shot hurt?

Some say that it makes the arm feel funny, but this feeling is brief. It may cause redness and slight swelling where the shot was given, but it's **very safe and it works!**

What if I don't get it?

Please see Nick's story on the back for one example.

“While away at a Massachusetts summer camp in 1999, 14-year old Nick Springer contracted a rare, but potentially deadly infection called meningococcal disease. Although he survived, he endured the amputation of his hands and his legs below the knees. He also lost hearing in his left ear as a result of the disease.

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Nick and his family didn’t know about the disease or about the lifestyle factors common among adolescents and young adults that increase their risk. These include crowded living situations, such as sleep-away camps. Nor did they know meningococcal disease is potentially vaccine preventable.

On August 6, Nick complained of not feeling well, and he stayed overnight in the camp infirmary. By morning, he was vomiting severely and had a rash on his torso. Realizing Nick had a serious bacterial infection, the camp immediately administered an IV antibiotic and transported Nick to the nearest hospital. There, Nick was diagnosed with meningococcal meningitis and was transferred to a second hospital better equipped to deal with his condition.

The emergency doctor at Berkshire Medical Center called Nick’s parents to say that he was very sick and was being airlifted to Bay State Medical Center in Springfield, Massachusetts. Nick was then put into a drug-induced coma that would last for nearly two months.

Nick has since recovered and continues to stay active by competing in events like wheelchair rugby with the USA Paralympics team. His team won a gold medal at the Beijing Paralympics. Nick also helps in the rehabilitation process for those with new injuries and teaches children in wheelchairs.”

Story courtesy of www.nmaus.org and picture from Nick Springer.

For additional information on this and all vaccines please see the following trustworthy resources:

www.vaccine.chop.edu

www.immunize.org

www.aimtoolkit.org

www.nmaus.org

www.meningitis-angels.org

www.cdc.gov/vaccines

www.michigan.gov/immunize

If, after reading this information, you still feel vaccination is not right for you or your child, please follow this advice:

Make sure all health care professionals, including emergency rooms, urgent care centers, and ambulance drivers know you or your child is not fully vaccinated. It could help them diagnose and treat a vaccine preventable disease.

Symptoms of meningitis can include a sudden, severe headache, fever, or stiff neck. There is often a purple rash or blotches on the trunk. **Call an ambulance if these symptoms are present.**

