



## INFORMATION ABOUT MENINGOCOCCAL MENINGITIS

The State University of New York is 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, Governor Pataki signed New York State Public Health Law (NYS PHL) §2167 requiring institutions, including colleges and universities, to distribute information about meningococcal disease and vaccination to all students meeting the enrollment criteria, whether they live on or off campus. This law is effective as of August 15, 2003.

Colleges in New York State are required to maintain a record of the following for each student:

- A response to receipt of meningococcal disease and vaccine information signed by the student or student's parent or guardian. This must include information on the availability and cost of meningococcal meningitis vaccine.  
AND EITHER
- A record of meningococcal meningitis immunization within the past 10 years; OR
- An acknowledgement of meningococcal disease risks and refusal of meningococcal meningitis immunization signed by the student or student'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 membranes (lining) 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 (the age of most college students) have more than doubled since 1991. The disease strikes about 3,000 Americans each year and claims about 300 lives. Between 100 and 125 meningitis cases occur on college campuses and as many as 15 students will die from the disease.

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 college students. If you wish to receive the meningococcal meningitis vaccine, it is available either through your private health care provider, the campus health center and/or the county Department of Health.