Dear Parent:

As your child’s school nurse, I am writing to inform you about meningococcal disease, which includes meningitis. Meningococcal meningitis may be rare, but it’s often devastating. It can take the life of a child in just a single day.

Anyone can get meningitis, but preteens and teens are at greater risk than other age groups. In fact, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and other leading medical groups recommend meningococcal vaccination for preteens and teens 11 through 18 years of age and college freshmen living in dormitories to help protect them from the disease.

Meningococcal meningitis can be spread from one person to another through common everyday activities. This includes sharing eating utensils and drinking glasses, living in close quarters such as summer camps or dormitories, and kissing. Prevention is particularly important because the disease moves quickly and can be difficult to recognize, especially in its early stages, as symptoms are similar to those of the flu.

School nurses across the country have joined with families personally affected by meningitis to help educate parents about the disease and the importance of vaccination through the Voices of Meningitis campaign.

I am lending my “voice” to this campaign and urging you to help protect your preteen and teenage children by having them vaccinated. Vaccination has been available for years as a safe and effective way to help protect against the disease. The cost of the vaccine is covered by most health insurance or you can contact your local public health department to determine if your child is eligible to receive the vaccine free of charge through programs like the Vaccines for Children Program. Every health-care visit is an opportunity to talk to your child’s health-care provider about vaccination.

For more information about meningococcal meningitis and vaccination, please call or visit my office, or go to www.VoicesOfMeningitis.org.

Sincerely,
Karen Micale, MSN, RN, NCSN
School Nurse