

NEWS RELEASE

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Sixty Percent of North Dakota 16 and 17-Year-Old Students Unprotected from Bacterial Meningitis

BISMARCK, N.D. – The new school year is quickly approaching and the North Dakota Department of Health (NDDoH) is reminding parents to get their children up-to-date with school-required immunizations before school begins.

Immunization requirements in North Dakota have changed with the 2018-2019 school year. Two doses of meningococcal conjugate vaccine (MCV4) will be required for students entering grades 11 and 12 this fall. According to the NDDoH, as of July 1 only 40 percent of North Dakota 16 and 17-year-olds have had the second dose of MCV4. This leaves a lot of students still unprotected.

According to Lexie Barber, epidemiologist with the NDDoH, “MCV4 protects against meningococcal disease, a serious bacterial infection that can cause meningitis and possibly lead to death or permanent disability within hours of first symptoms.”

If you haven’t done so already, check with your health care provider or local public health unit to find out which vaccines your child needs. Information on school immunization requirements are also available at www.ndhealth.gov/Immunize/Schools-ChildCare/. Once your child is up to date on immunizations, please be sure to get a copy of their immunization record to submit to their school. Students in all grades should be compliant with immunization requirements before starting school. All students must be compliant by October 1 of this year or be excluded from school until they meet requirements.

Cost should not be a barrier for children to be up-to-date on immunizations. If your child is American Indian, Medicaid-eligible, uninsured or your insurance does not cover vaccines, children can receive vaccines at no cost through the Vaccines for Children Program (VFC). Speak to your health care provider or local public health unit if you believe your child would be eligible for VFC vaccines.

For more information on school immunization requirements, contact Lexie Barber, North Dakota Department of Health, at 701.328.2335 or visit the website at <http://www.ndhealth.gov/Immunize/Schools-ChildCare/>.