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YOUR GROWING CHILD



A newsletter for families of Partners in Pediatrics Ltd.
An affiliate of Children's Hospitals and Clinics of Minnesota



New Meningitis Vaccine Keeps Your Teens Safer

There is no infection that causes more fear in a parent than meningitis. And for good reason. Meningitis can be devastating and can unexpectedly infect otherwise healthy individuals.

Since the release of the *Hemophilus Influenza B* and *Strep Pneumonia* vaccines, the incidence of meningitis in the very young has declined dramatically.

In adolescents, we routinely give a vaccine against the bacteria *Neisseria meningitides*. About 1 out of 10 people are carriers of this germ, harboring it in the back of their nose and throat with no signs or symptoms of disease.

The germs are spread by respiratory droplets (during a cough or sneeze) and by throat secretions. In adolescents, the peak age of infection is ages 16 to 23 years.

Anyone can get meningococcal disease, but the disease peaks in teens and young adults. In 2013, there were 550 cases of meningococcal disease in the United States. Its after-effects can be devastating.

About 10 to 15 out of 100 people infected will die. About 11 to 19 out of every 100 survivors will have long-term disabilities, such as loss of limb, deafness, nervous system problems or brain damage.

Outbreaks of meningitis most often occur where groups of people gather: schools, colleges, prisons and within communities. The germs are spread by casual contact or by inhaling the air in a place where an ill person has been. Fortunately, these bacteria are not as easily spread as some other germs like chickenpox or influenza.

The symptoms of meningitis are:

- Fever
- Headache
- Stiff neck
- Nausea

- Vomiting
- Photophobia (increased sensitivity to light)
- Altered mental state (confusion)

The symptoms of meningococcal meningitis can appear quickly or over several days, usually within 3-7 days after

exposure.

There are five strains (or subtypes) of the meningococcal germ that cause meningitis throughout the world. In the United States three of them cause the majority of disease.

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Influenza is Back and Not Backing Down

Human history is full of classic feuds. The Hatfields and the McCoys. Cain and Abel. But one feud occurs annually that pits the good guys against the bad like no other. That feud is our never-ending fight to get ahead of the influenza virus.

For the majority of human history, the influenza virus has had the upper hand. It is an ancient disease thought to have been around for at least 2,000 years. It has been the cause of 10 worldwide epidemics over the last 300 years. And we only identified the influenza virus in 1933. Since then it has been a race to

protect a human population against an increasingly smart, evolving virus.

The *Spanish flu pandemic* of 1918 was responsible for the deaths of 50 million people and affected from 20 to 40 percent of the world's population. Nearly 675,000 people died in the United States. This was twice as many people as in the *Black Death* in Europe during the Middle Ages.

And yet many families treat influenza as just another cold. They question the

reason for an annual flu vaccine. They feel that getting the virus builds up better protection.

These can be deadly misconceptions. There are two main influenza viruses commonly labeled as "A" and "B."

Each of these types can have many different subtypes. Each year the influenza virus can mutate forming essentially an entirely new germ. Even after you suffer a bout of influenza, you can still get it again since the virus changes its identity often.

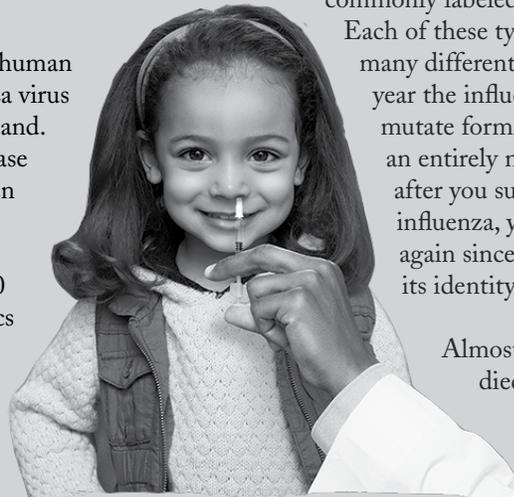
Almost 150 children died of influenza last year in the United States. Half had no

underlying disease. Almost 18,000 people were hospitalized.

The flu virus is very unpredictable. Each year the United States experiences epidemics of seasonal flu. Sometimes Minnesota is hit hard and sometimes it is not. What we can guarantee is that influenza will be here.

In Minnesota, flu season occurs in the winter. Outbreaks can start as early as

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Influenza Vaccine Save Lives

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October and can last as late as May. At *Partners in Pediatrics* we are stocking both the injectable vaccine and the nasal mist.

It's easy to know who needs to be vaccinated. The *Centers for Disease Control (CDC)* recommend that everyone over age 6 months get vaccinated. That applies to practically everyone. Certain groups should not be vaccinated and you may talk to your provider to see if your children are in any of those groups. It is important to make sure everyone spending time around infants younger than six months is vaccinated to help protect them since they cannot be vaccinated.

Many people confuse influenza with "the stomach flu" which is a stomach virus that causes vomiting and diarrhea. These are two separate illnesses that are not related. Catching one does not protect against the other. And a cold with a low-grade fever that lasts a few days is probably not influenza either. There are over 200 viruses that can cause flu-like symptoms.

Illness from influenza can range from mild to very severe. Typically children less than five years of age and especially

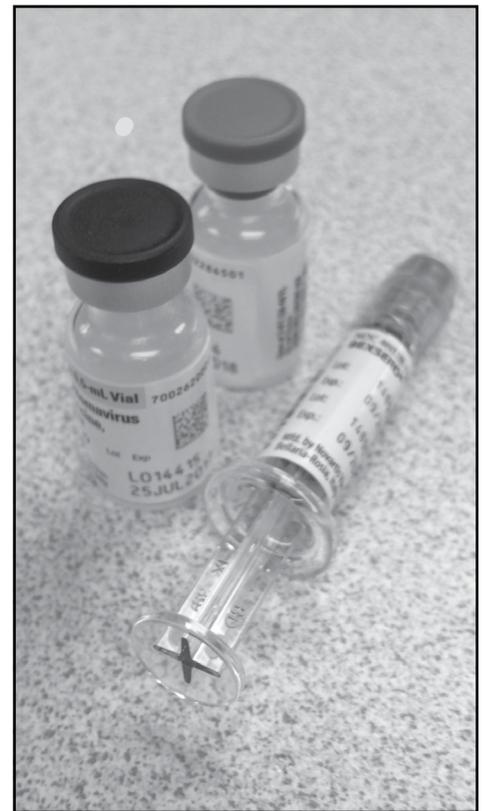
less than two are at higher risk for serious complications from the flu.

There are simple things you can do to protect yourself and your family:

- **Get vaccinated.** You and the rest of your family. Do yourself a favor.
- **Don't get exposed.** Stay away from people with influenza symptoms and if you have symptoms, don't go to work or school.
- **Make sure your immune system stays healthy.** Eat healthy. Get enough rest. Exercise.
- **Wash your hands.** Influenza is spread by respiratory droplets. They can live on some surfaces like countertops and door knobs. Touching these surfaces and then touching your nose or mouth give the flu germs a free trip into your body. Wash your hands frequently or use hand sanitizer.

Influenza can be deadly. It causes days of misery and discomfort, not to mention the hours missed of school and work productivity. Do yourself a favor: Get vaccinated. Vaccinate your family. Tell your friends to get the vaccine.

Here's to a healthy winter.



Another Strike Against Meningitis

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The current adolescent meningitis vaccine we have been giving at age 11 and 16 covers only two of the three subtypes.

Because we have not had a vaccine to cover the last subtype, we were unable to protect teenagers and young adults against all strains of this meningitis, which was a concern.

Now we can. Since September, we have been giving an additional meningitis vaccine (Bexsero) that covers the last subtype.

This new vaccine, combined with the meningitis vaccine that we will continue to give, now protects against all the common infectious strains of *Neisseria meningitides* in the United States.

We have this new vaccine in stock at all of our clinics. It is recommended that your teenager get the first dose of Bexsero at age 16. A second dose should be given one month later.

This is a major advancement against a killer disease.

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Hannah Wilhelm PA-C

Appointment Hours

Monday through Friday 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Pediatric Ready Care Hours — Walk-ins Welcome!

Monday through Friday
8 a.m. to 5 p.m. all clinics

Monday through Thursday
5 p.m. to 8 p.m.
Maple Grove

Saturdays and Sundays
8:30 a.m.—12:30 p.m.
Maple Grove only



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