

Bernards Township Public Schools
School Nurse's Office

To: Parents / Guardians of incoming sixth grade students
From: Nurses Karuppan and DeAngelis
Date: June 2009

This is to inform you that in accordance with Chapter 14 of the New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services, we will now require Healthcare Provider documented proof of the following two vaccines for all students born on or after January 1, 1997 and entering sixth grade (or a comparable age level special education program with an unassigned grade):

- One dose of the **meningococcal vaccine.**
- **One dose of Tdap vaccine.** Required when **five** years have elapsed since last DTP/DtaP or Td vaccine. Please note that your child may have already received the above vaccines and is therefore up to date regarding this state mandate. Please check with his / her Healthcare Provider and then please provide this information to the school nurse (if not presently documented in your child's school health record) prior to **September 2009.**

Students will not be allowed to enter sixth grade without these vaccines.

Fact sheets about meningococcal meningitis are available on-line at:

- NJ Department of Health and Senior Services: www.nj.gov/health
- Centers for Disease Control & Prevention: <http://www.cdc.gov>

These fact sheets will also be distributed annually to all parents / guardians of all sixth grade students.

Briefly, Meningitis is an infection of the meninges (the covering of the brain and spinal cord) and can be either viral (known as aseptic meningitis) or due to bacteria (referred to as bacterial meningitis).

Viral meningitis is more common and usually is present in the summer and early fall seasons. It is normally less debilitating compared to bacterial meningitis.

Viral meningitis is contracted through direct contact with saliva and stool of an infected person and is more common in children and in people with weakened immune systems.

There is no medication specifically given to cure viral meningitis. Treatment basically consists of rest, fluids and fever-reducing medication.

Prevention of viral meningitis is aimed at good handwashing techniques and good personal hygiene.

Bacterial meningitis is spread by respiratory droplets and close contact. It is most commonly caused by the bacteria: *Neisseria meningitidis*, *Hemophilus influenzae*, and *Streptococcus (Diplococcus) pneumoniae*. A tiny purple rash (petechial or purpuric rash) can occur (sign of generalized septicemia-infection in blood). Bacterial meningitis can be lethal within hours (symptoms: severe headache, high fever, neck stiffness, nausea / vomiting, fatigue, confusion) and requires urgent medical treatment.

The Tdap vaccine is given to prevent Tetanus (lockjaw), Diphtheria is a bacterial infection that usually affects the tonsils, pharynx, heart and neural tissue and sometimes skin. Pertussis is commonly referred to as Whooping Cough.

These illnesses can be preventable with vaccination.