

## COLUMBUS COUNTY SCHOOLS MENINGOCOCCAL MENINGITIS AND INFLUENZA INFORMATION SHEET

In order to comply with the General Assembly of North Carolina General Statute below, the following information is provided to all parents of students in Columbus County Schools, at the beginning of each school year.

**§ 115C-375.4. Meningococcal Meningitis and Influenza and Their Vaccines.** Local boards of education shall ensure that schools provide parents and guardians with information about meningococcal meningitis and influenza and their vaccines at the beginning of every school year. This information shall include the causes, symptoms, and how meningococcal meningitis and influenza are spread and the places where parents and guardians may obtain additional information and vaccinations for their children. (2005-22, s. 4(a), (b).)

**Influenza**, commonly known as the flu, is a contagious respiratory viral infection of the nose, throat and lungs. Possible symptoms are fever, chills, cough, sore throat, runny/stuffy nose, muscle/body aches, fatigue, nausea, vomiting and headache. Influenza is spread when those infected cough, sneeze or talk and the droplets produced enter into others through their nose, mouth or by touching contaminated surfaces.

The Flu Vaccine is available to help prevent its spread. Vaccinations are recommended annually starting in September through May. There are 3 types of the flu vaccine shot: 1<sup>st</sup> for people 6 months and older that is healthy, chronically ill persons or pregnant; 2<sup>nd</sup> a high dose vaccine for people 65 years old or older; and 3<sup>rd</sup> Interdermal for people ages 18-64. A nasal spray flu vaccine is a live vaccine available for healthy people ages 2-49 years old, but is not for those who are pregnant

**Meningococcal Meningitis** is caused by bacteria that is transmitted through exchange of throat and respiratory secretions of people who live in close quarters together or by kissing. Once transmitted, the bacteria infects the protective membranes covering the brain thus leading to sudden onset of fever, headache, sensitivity to light, confusion, nausea, vomiting and stiff neck.

Healthy habits and administration of the meningococcal vaccine are methods for prevention. Healthy habits include, but are not limited to, good overall hygiene, no sharing of personal items, hand washing and covering your cough/sneeze. The Center for Disease Control recommends the vaccine for adolescents age 11-12 with a follow up booster at age 16. They also recommend teens between the ages of 13-15 that have not received the vaccine prior should receive it then a booster between the ages of 16-18. If a person is 16 years old or older and has never received the vaccine, CDC still recommends the vaccine but with no need for a follow up booster dose. Ages 16-21 are the most susceptible ages. The Meningococcal vaccine is required for admittance for most college campuses.

More information can be obtained at your local health department or doctor's office, as well as at the Center for Disease Control website, <http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vpd-vac/default.htm> .  
Vaccine administration can be received at your local health department or doctor's office.