



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 16, 2018

Wolf Administration Reminds Parents, College Students About Required Meningitis Vaccination

Harrisburg, PA – The Wolf Administration today reminded families that meningitis vaccinations are required for most incoming college students before the new school year begins.

The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania College and University Student Vaccination Act of 2002 requires all students who are residing in college or university-owned housing to have at least one dose of the meningococcal conjugate vaccine. A student, or parent or guardian of the student if he or she is under the age of 18, may sign a waiver declining the vaccine after being given literature on it and the disease.

“Meningitis is an illness that can occur very rapidly, and the symptoms can be very severe and potentially deadly,” Secretary of Health Dr. Rachel Levine said. “We cannot emphasize enough how important it is to get a vaccine. The meningitis vaccine is a safe, effective way to prevent getting this disease. It is also important to remember good hygiene, like washing your hands when you are around a lot of other people, such as in a college setting.”

“Under the Affordable Care Act, most private insurance plans are required to cover vaccinations listed by the federal Centers for Disease Control, such as the meningococcal vaccine for most first-year residential college students, as a preventive service without charging a copayment or coinsurance, regardless of whether or not a person has met his or her yearly deductible,” said Insurance Commissioner Jessica Altman. “However, it is important to make sure that the provider who administers the immunization is within an individual’s health insurance plan network, or the consumer could incur costs.”

Meningitis is a disease caused by the spread of bacteria, starting in the ears, sinuses, or throat. It is spread through an infected cough or sneeze. Frequent hand washing is strongly encouraged in order to help prevent it.

Most people who come into contact with the meningococcus bacteria do not get sick. However, those who do encounter the bacteria frequently get sick quickly, and the symptoms can be very severe. Common symptoms include high fever, headache and stiff neck. Other symptoms can include nausea, vomiting, sensitivity to light, confusion and sleepiness. As the disease progresses, patients may have seizures.

Even with prompt treatment, severe forms of meningitis can be fatal in approximately 10 percent of cases, and many survivors have long-term health issues, including limb loss, mental impairment and hearing loss.

For more information on meningitis, visit www.health.pa.gov.

If you have any questions about insurance coverage, visit the Pennsylvania Insurance Department website www.insurance.pa.gov or call 1-877-881-6388.

MEDIA CONTACT: Nate Wardle, DOH, 717-787-1783 or RA-DHPressOffice@pa.gov

Ron Ruman, Insurance, 717-787-3289

#