

Understanding the Bacterial Meningitis Vaccine Requirement

The health and safety of our students is a top priority at **Slidell Independent School District**. Texas law requires certain immunizations for school attendance to help protect students from vaccine-preventable diseases, including **meningococcal disease (bacterial meningitis)**. These requirements are established by the **Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS)**. (dshs.texas.gov)

What is bacterial meningitis?

Bacterial meningitis is a serious infection caused by bacteria that invade the protective lining of the brain and spinal cord. Although uncommon, the disease can progress rapidly and become life-threatening. Even with prompt medical treatment, bacterial meningitis can result in severe complications such as hearing loss, brain damage, limb loss, or death. (dshs.texas.gov)

Why is the vaccine required?

To help protect students and reduce the spread of meningococcal disease, the Texas Department of State Health Services requires students entering **7th grade** to receive **one dose of the quadrivalent meningococcal conjugate vaccine (MenACWY)** on or after their **11th birthday**, unless they qualify for a valid medical or conscientious exemption permitted under Texas law. (dshs.texas.gov)

How is meningococcal disease spread?

The bacteria that cause meningococcal disease are spread through **close, prolonged contact with respiratory or throat secretions**, such as:

- Coughing or sneezing
- Kissing
- Sharing drinks, eating utensils, or other personal items that come into contact with saliva
- Living or spending extended periods in close contact with an infected person

The disease is **not spread through casual contact** such as walking by someone or brief classroom interactions. (dshs.texas.gov)

How does the vaccine help?

The meningococcal vaccine helps protect against several strains of bacteria that commonly cause meningococcal disease. Vaccination significantly reduces the risk of serious illness and is one of the most effective ways to protect both individual students and the school community. (dshs.texas.gov)

What Parents Need to Know

Parents and guardians of students entering **7th grade** should:

- Ensure their child receives the required **MenACWY (meningococcal) vaccine** on or after their 11th birthday.
- Submit an updated immunization record to the school nurse before the first day of attendance, if applicable.
- Contact their healthcare provider or local health department if they have questions about immunizations.
- Review the Texas immunization requirements annually, as state requirements may change.

Additional Resources

For more information about bacterial meningitis and Texas school immunization requirements, please visit:

- **Texas Department of State Health Services – School Immunization Requirements**
- **Texas Department of State Health Services – Meningococcal Disease Information**

If you have questions regarding your child's immunization records or school immunization requirements, please contact the District Nurse.