



Cerro Gordo County
Department of Public Health

MEDIA RELEASE

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World Meningitis Day is an opportunity to focus on importance of vaccination

(Mason City) – The Cerro Gordo County Department of Public Health is recognizing World Meningitis Day on April 24, 2016. They are working to raise awareness about meningitis and emphasize the importance of vaccination against it. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) strongly encourages all Iowans to get routine vaccinations to prevent the most severe types of meningitis. Meningitis is an inflammation of the covering of the brain and spinal cord that is most commonly caused by viruses and bacteria. Meningitis can affect anyone, of any age, at any time. However, babies and young children are most at risk, and young adults 15-24 years are also a higher risk group.

Meningococcal disease is a rare, but dangerous bacterial infection that most often causes meningitis and blood poisoning (sepsis). The signs and symptoms of meningococcal disease can come on suddenly and include flu like symptoms such as fever, nausea, vomiting, severe headache, stiff neck, confusion, sensitivity to light, and possible rash. The bacteria responsible for the disease is spread through close person-to-person contact. Examples include kissing, sharing utensils or toothbrushes, drinking from the same cup, sleeping in the same room as the infected person, direct contact with a patient's saliva, or coughing in close contact.

Approximately 600- 1,000 people contract meningococcal disease in the United States each year. Of those who get meningococcal disease 10-15 percent die and among those who survive, approximately 1 in 5 live with permanent disabilities, such as brain damage, hearing loss, loss of kidney function or limb amputation.

“Vaccination remains the best defense against meningitis,” says Bethany Bjorklund, Immunization Nurse, Cerro Gordo County Department of Public Health. “Receiving routine childhood, adolescent, and adult vaccinations can prevent the most severe types of meningitis.” The health department now offers the serogroup B meningococcal vaccine for adolescents and young adults age 16-23, with a preferred age of 16 to 18. Serogroup B makes up 30% of all meningococcal disease in the U.S. Until 2015, there was no vaccine available in the U.S. to offer protection against serogroup B meningococcal disease.

The CDC has already been recommending routine meningococcal vaccination to protect against four of the five major serogroups (A, C, Y and W) with an initial dose at age 11-12 and a booster dose at age 16. The CDC suggests that adolescents receive the vaccine five years before starting college.

Parents, teens, and young adults should speak with their healthcare provider or contact the Cerro Gordo County Department of Public Health at 641-421-9321 about full protection against all five major serogroups of meningococcal disease (A, C, W, Y and B).

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