MENINGOCOCCAL MENINGITIS FACT SHEET

WHAT IS MENINGOCOCCAL DISEASE? Meningococcal disease is a severe bacterial infection of the bloodstream or meninges (a thin lining covering the brain and spinal cord) caused by the meningococcus germ.

WHO GETS MENINGOCOCCAL DISEASE? Anyone can get meningococcal disease, but it is more common in infants and children. For some adolescents, such as first year college students living in dormitories, there is an increased risk of meningococcal disease. Every year in the United States approximately 2,500 people are infected and 300 die from the disease. Other persons at increased risk include household contacts of a person known to have had this disease, immunocompromised people, and people traveling to parts of the world where meningococcal meningitis is prevalent.

HOW IS THE MENINGOCOCCUS GERM SPREAD? The meningococcus germ is spread by direct close contact with nose or throat discharges of an infected person.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS? High fever, headache, vomiting, stiff neck and a rash are symptoms of meningococcal disease. Among those who live, permanent brain damage, hearing loss, kidney failure, loss of arms or legs, or chronic nervous system problems can occur. The symptoms may appear 2 to 10 days after exposure, but usually within 5 days.

WHAT IS THE TREATMENT FOR MENINGOCOCCAL DISEASE? Antibiotics, such as penicillin G or ceftriaxone, can be used to treat people with meningococcal disease.

SHOULD PEOPLE WHO HAVE BEEN IN CONTACT WITH A DIAGNOSED CASE OF MENINGOCOCCAL MENINGITIS BE TREATED? Only people who have been in close contact (household members, intimate contacts, health care personnel performing mouth-to-mouth resuscitation, day care center playmates, etc.) need to be considered for preventive treatment. Such people are usually advised to obtain a prescription for a special antibiotic (either rifampin, ciprofloxacin or ceftriaxone) from their physician. Casual contact as might occur in a regular classroom, office or factory setting is not usually significant enough to cause concern.

IS THERE A VACCINE TO PREVENT MENINGOCOCCAL MENINGITIS? In February 2005, the CDC recommended a new vaccine, known as Menactra™, for use to prevent meningococcal disease. The previous version of this vaccine, Menomune™, was first available in the United States in 1985. Both vaccines are 85% to 100% effective in preventing the 4 kinds of the meningococcus germ (types A, C, Y, W-135). These 4 types cause about 70% of the disease in the United States. Because the vaccine does not include type B, which accounts for about one-third of cases in adolescents, it does not prevent all cases of meningococcal disease.

IS THE VACCINE SAFE? ARE THERE ADVERSE SIDE EFFECTS TO THE VACCINE? Both vaccines are currently available and both are safe and effective vaccines. However, both vaccines may cause mild and infrequent side effects, such as redness and pain at the injection site lasting up to two days.

WHO SHOULD GET THE MENINGOCOCCAL VACCINE? The vaccine is recommended for all adolescents entering middle school (11-12 years old) and high school (15 years old) and all first year college students living in dormitories. Also at increased risk are people with terminal complement deficiencies or asplenia, some laboratory workers and travelers to endemic areas of the world. However, the vaccine will benefit all teenagers and young adults in the United States.

WHAT IS THE DURATION OF PROTECTION FROM THE VACCINE? Menomune™, the older version, requires booster doses every 3 to 5 years. Although research is still pending, the new vaccine, Menactra™, will probably not require booster doses. As with any vaccine, vaccination against meningitis may not protect 100% of all susceptible individuals.

HOW DO I GET MORE INFORMATION ABOUT MENINGOCOCCAL DISEASE AND VACCINATION? Contact your family physician or your student health service. Additional information is also available on the websites of the New York State Department of Health, www.health.state.ny.us; the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention www.cdc.gov/ncid/dbmd/diseaseinfo; and the American College Health Association, www.acha.org.

REQUIRED ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF MENINGITIS INFORMATION:
It is mandatory that you check one of the following boxes and sign below, or you will not be permitted to continue your enrollment at SCCC as per NYS Public Health Law 2167:

- I have/My child (who is under the age of 18) has received the meningococcal meningitis immunization (Menomune™/Menactra™) within the past 10 years. Date received ____________ (Appropriate documentation should be submitted to the Health Services Office.)

- I have read, or have had explained to me, the information regarding meningococcal meningitis disease. I understand the risks of not receiving the vaccine. I have decided that I (my child) will NOT obtain the immunization against meningococcal meningitis disease.

To the best of my knowledge the above statements are true.

Student Signature ____________ Date ____________ Parent/Guardian Signature (i.e., if student is under age 18) ____________