



## HARTWICK COLLEGE

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As the college health service director at Hartwick College, I am writing to inform you about meningococcal disease, a potentially fatal bacterial infection commonly referred to as meningitis. New York State Public Health Law (NYS PHL) §2167 requires institutions, including colleges and universities, to distribute information about meningococcal disease and vaccine to all students meeting the enrollment criteria, whether they live on or off campus.

Hartwick College is required to maintain a record of the following for each student:

- A response to receipt of meningococcal disease and vaccine information signed by the student or student's parent or guardian (if the student is a minor)  
AND EITHER
- A record of meningococcal immunization **within the past 5 years**; OR
- An acknowledgement of meningococcal disease risks and refusal of meningococcal immunization signed by the student or student's parent or guardian.

Meningococcal disease is rare. However, when it strikes, its flu-like symptoms make diagnosis difficult. Meningococcal disease can cause serious illnesses such as infection of the lining of the brain and spinal column (meningitis) or blood infections (sepsis). The disease strikes quickly and can lead to severe and permanent disabilities, such as hearing loss, brain damage, seizures, limb amputation and even lead to death.

Meningococcal disease can be easily spread from person-to-person by coughing, sharing beverages or eating utensils, kissing, or spending time in close contact with someone who is sick or who carries the bacteria. People can spread the bacteria that causes meningococcal disease even before they know they are sick. There have been several outbreaks of meningococcal disease at college campuses across the United States.

The single best way to prevent meningococcal disease is to be vaccinated. The meningococcal ACWY (MenACWY) vaccine protects against four major strains of bacteria which cause about two-thirds of meningococcal disease in the United States (U.S.). The MenACWY vaccine is recommended for all U.S. teenagers and young adults up to age 21 years. Protection from the MenACWY vaccine is estimated to last about 3 to 5 years, so young adults who received the MenACWY vaccine before their 16<sup>th</sup> birthday should get a booster dose before entering college. The meningococcal B (MenB) vaccine protects against a fifth type of meningococcal disease, which accounts for about one-third of cases in the U.S. Young adults aged 16 through 23 years may choose to receive the MenB vaccine series. They should discuss the MenB vaccine with a healthcare provider.

All private insurance plans not grandfathered under the Affordable Care Act are required to cover the cost of MenACWY and MenB vaccines. Contact your health insurance plan to determine whether it covers MenACWY and MenB vaccines. The federal Vaccines for Children (VFC) and NYS Vaccines for Adults (VFA) programs will cover both MenACWY and MenB vaccines for children and adults who have no health insurance or whose health insurance does not cover these vaccines, as well as for children less than 19 years of age who are American Indian or Alaska Native or eligible for Medicaid or Child Health Plus.

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Hartwick College Student Health Center can provide the MenACWY vaccine (Menactra) with an appointment at a cost of \$120 paid to the Perrella Health Center in cash or check or billed to the student's account. A receipt will be provided which the student/parent may submit to their private insurance company. Hartwick College does not directly bill private insurance companies for the cost of the vaccine. Those students with the College Student Health Insurance Plan are able to have the cost fully covered by that plan. Hartwick College does not participate in the VFA or the VFA program. Students who wish to have the vaccine are encouraged to make arrangements with their own primary care provider. Those wishing to make arrangements to receive the vaccine after arriving at Hartwick College should contact Perrella Health Center for assistance in locating a local provider who can administer the vaccine or setting up an appointment with the Otsego County Health Department for immunization if they are not enrolled in the College Health Insurance Plan.

Please carefully review the attached Meningococcal Disease Fact Sheet. It is also available on the New York State Department of Health website at [www.health.ny.gov/publications/2168.pdf](http://www.health.ny.gov/publications/2168.pdf). **Complete the Meningococcal Vaccination Response Form and return it to Hartwick College with your mandatory health documents.**

*NOTE: PER PUBLIC HEALTH LAW, NO INSTITUTION SHOULD PERMIT ANY STUDENT TO ATTEND THE INSTITUTION IN EXCESS OF 30 DAYS WITHOUT COMPLYING WITH THIS LAW.*

To learn more about meningococcal disease and the vaccine, please feel free to contact our health service and/or consult your child's physician. You can also find information about the disease on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website at [www.cdc.gov/meningococcal/](http://www.cdc.gov/meningococcal/).

Please contact me if you have any questions.

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Hartwick College