



SNOO

School Nurse Organization of Oklahoma

The School Nurse Organization of Oklahoma (SNOO), would like to make you aware of recent cases of meningococcal disease in Oologah-Talala, OK. As you know, meningococcal disease is a rare, but serious bacterial infection that can cause meningitis and take the life of a child in just a single day. As school nurses, we have the opportunity to help educate parents about this devastating disease and that vaccination can help protect their children.

While meningitis is rare, certain lifestyle factors – such as sharing water bottles, drinking glasses, and kissing – can put even healthy kids at risk for getting the disease. Parents can help protect their children against meningitis by getting them vaccinated.

Anyone can get meningococcal meningitis, but preteens and teens are at greater risk and five times more likely to die compared with other age groups. Health officials recommend vaccination for preteens and teens 11 through 18 years of age and college freshmen living in dormitories. In Oklahoma, only 1 in 4 adolescents between 13 and 17 years of age has received the meningitis vaccine. This underscores the importance of educating our students' parents about vaccination.¹

Preventing meningitis is particularly important because the disease moves quickly and can be hard to recognize, especially in its early stages because symptoms are similar to flu-like symptoms. Vaccination is safe and effective and the best way to protect against the disease.

SNOO has joined the National Association of School Nurses' *Voices of Meningitis* campaign to raise awareness about this disease and encourage vaccination for preteens and teens. The campaign provides various resources to help our members and other school nurses nationwide reach parents, students, and other community members with information about the dangers of meningococcal meningitis and the importance of vaccination. Educational materials to assist you in raising awareness are available for downloading free of charge on www.VoicesOfMeningitis.org, and additional materials will be added to the resource kit in the coming months.

Voices of Meningitis is a program of the National Association of School Nurses in collaboration with sanofi pasteur.

Thank you for helping us to raise awareness about meningococcal meningitis prevention in Oklahoma.

Sincerely,

Lana Woods
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¹ National Immunization Survey, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/stats-surv/nisteen/tables/08/tab01_iap.xls. Accessed March 11, 2010.