

Dear Wesleyan Parent,

All students entering Wesleyan are required to have certain immunizations to help prevent a variety of diseases, including diphtheria, pertussis, tetanus, polio, Haemophilus Influenza type b, Hepatitis B, measles, mumps and rubella. There are newer vaccines that are not required for school entry but you will want to consider for your child's health. Some of these vaccines help prevent diseases that affect specific populations (such as adolescent and college students or females).

Immunizations that you may want to consider include the influenza vaccine (flu shot) and the meningococcal meningitis vaccine. Neither of these vaccines are vaccines that are required to attend school, but they are important for the health of all children. A third immunization, the Human Papillomavirus (HPV), is targeted toward females ages 9 - 26 to prevent cervical cancer and other complications.

Influenza (commonly called the flu) is a respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses and is easily spread from one person to another. Influenza illness can be mild to life-threatening – especially for those adults and children with chronic health problems. The symptoms of the flu include fever (usually high), headache, extreme tiredness, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, dry cough, and muscle aches. Other symptoms, such as nausea, vomiting and diarrhea, are more common among children than adults. Immunization is encouraged, even in healthy children, because infection with the flu can lead to other problems, such as pneumonia, inflammation of the heart, and inflammation of the lungs. You will want to check with your child's doctor or the local health department during the month of October for the Centers for Disease Control's (CDC) recommendations for vaccination.

Meningococcal meningitis is a form of bacterial meningitis (sometimes referred to as spinal meningitis). It is a serious, potentially fatal bacterial infection that can cause severe swelling of the fluid around the brain and spinal cord, or a serious blood infection. For those that survive, the long-term effects can include brain damage, seizures, hearing loss or limb amputations. Meningococcal meningitis is spread from person to person through the air or by contact with saliva, usually through close, personal contact with an infected person. It is also spread through coughing, sneezing, or sharing items like a drinking glass or utensils. Symptoms can progress rapidly and resemble the flu. Symptoms include fever, headache, stiff neck, nausea, vomiting, confusion, sleepiness, sensitivity to light, and sometimes a rash on the arms and legs.

College students have been considered at increased risk but recent recommendations for vaccination against meningococcal meningitis have included adolescents. The reason for the increased risk may be due to lifestyle factors common among these age groups, such as living in crowded situations (dormitories or summer camps), irregular sleep habits and active or passive smoking. The newest vaccines protect against four of the five most common types of meningitis and the anticipated period of protection is reported to be eight to 10 years. You will want to talk with your child's doctor to see if your adolescent child would benefit from this vaccine.

Human Papillomavirus (HPV) is a common virus that is spread from one person to another by skin-to-skin contact in the genital area. There are about 40 types of HPV that can infect men and women. Some types can cause cervical cancer in women and other types can cause genital warts in both men and women. HPV can infect a woman's cervix and cause the cells to change. These cell changes (also called cervical dysplasia) can lead to cancer if they are not treated.

The only protection against HPV infection is lifelong abstinence or a monogamous relationship with an uninfected partner. While your child may practice abstinence, her future spouse may not have. A new vaccine can now protect females (ages 9 - 26) from four major types of HPV. These include two types that cause 70% of cervical cancer and two types that cause about 90% of genital warts. HPV vaccine can prevent most genital warts and many cases of cervical cancer. The HPV vaccine does not prevent other sexually transmitted infections.

Immunizations are an important means of preventing some very serious diseases. Your healthcare provider can answer any questions that you have about these immunizations that are not required but are recommended for your child's best health. Additional information is available on the *Immunize North Carolina* website (www.immunizenc.com), from your local Department of Health or your healthcare provider.