August 2015

Dear Parent of an entering student,

We would like to make you aware of a way that you can further protect your child from Meningococcal disease. Meningococcal disease is rare, but fast-moving and potentially fatal. One in 10 that contract this disease dies, sometimes within 24 hours. One in 5 that survive will experience permanent devastating consequences such as amputation, brain damage, or hearing loss.

Meningitis disease can be caused by different serogroups, but serogroup B was responsible for 33% of all meningitis cases reported in 2013. On average there are between 110 and 188 cases of meningococcal group B disease annually in the United States.

Your child should have received a meningococcal vaccine containing Serogroups A, C, Y, and W-135 between ages 11-12 years and then another dose when they turn 16 years. This vaccine does not contain Meningococcal Serogroup B.

A Meningococcal group B vaccine was approved by the FDA in October 2014 and a second group B vaccine was approved in January of 2015. The approval of these vaccines was in part because of two college outbreaks in 2013, which lead to the FDA allowing the use of the vaccine to prevent further disease on these campuses.

It is our recommendation that your child receive Meningococcal group B vaccine before they enter college for optimal protection during their college years. Meningococcal group B vaccine is available through some pharmacies, local public health departments, your medical provider (phone first to confirm availability), and the Kalamazoo College Student Health Center.

Some insurances are covering the vaccine for children 16 to 23 years of age, so it is best to call your health insurance carrier to confirm coverage. The Vaccine for Children (VFC) program covers Men B vaccine for children 16 – 18 years who are uninsured, underinsured, Medicaid, Alaskan Native or American Indian. The VFC program is available through your medical provider and local public health department.

Sincerely,

Kalamazoo College Student Health Center and Kalamazoo County Health and Community Services