**Important Health Information for Your Student**

**Back Pack Awareness**

**Finding a Safe Pack**

Backpacks are great when used properly. Before you buy one, though, consider a backpack's construction.

Look for the following to choose the right backpack:

* **a lightweight pack:** get one that doesn't add a lot of weight to your child's load; for example, leather packs look cool, but they weigh more than canvas backpacks
* **two wide, padded shoulder straps:** straps that are too narrow can dig into shoulders
* **a padded back:** it not only provides increased comfort, but also protects kids from being poked by sharp objects or edges (pencils, rulers, notebooks, etc.) inside the pack
* **a waist belt:** this helps to distribute the weight more evenly across the body
* **multiple compartments:** to help distribute the weight throughout the pack

Although, packs on wheels may be good options for students who have to lug around really heavy loads, they're very hard to pull up stairs and to roll through snow. Check with the school before buying a rolling pack; many don't allow them because they can be a tripping hazard in the hallways. For more information on this subject visit [www.bacsupport.com](http://www.bacsupport.com)

## Flu Vaccination

**Why should your student get vaccinated against the flu?**

Influenza is a serious disease that can lead to hospitalization and sometimes even death. Every flu season is different, and influenza infection can affect people differently, but millions of people get the flu every year, hundreds of thousands of people are hospitalized and thousands or tens of thousands of people die from flu-related causes every year. Even healthy people can get very sick from the flu and spread it to others. [CDC estimates(https://www.cdc.gov/flu/about/disease/2015-16.htm)](https://www.cdc.gov/flu/about/disease/2015-16.htm) that flu-related hospitalizations since 2010 ranged from 140,000 to 710,000, while flu-related deaths are estimated to have ranged from 12,000 to 56,000. During flu season, flu viruses circulate at higher levels in the U.S. population. (“Flu season” in the United States can begin as early as October and last as late as May.) An annual seasonal flu vaccine is the best way to reduce your risk of getting sick with seasonal flu and spreading it to others. When more people get vaccinated against the flu, less flu can spread through that community. Visit <http://www.alabamapublichealth.gov/immunization/flu-and-pneu-vaccines.html> for more information from the Alabama Department of Public Health.

**Meningitis Vaccination**

**What is Meningitis?**

Meningococcal disease is any illness caused by the bacteria *Neisseria meningitidis*. It is the leading cause of bacterial meningitis in children 2-18 years of age in U.S. Meningococcal disease can be very serious, even life-threatening in 48 hours or less. The two most severe and common illnesses caused by meningococcal bacteria include: Meningitis - an infection of the fluid and lining around the brain and spinal cord and Septicemia - a bloodstream infection.

**What I can do to protect my student?**

**Routine Vaccination** Two doses of Meningococcal conjugate vaccine (MCV4) are recommended for adolescents 11 through 18 years of age: the first dose at 11 or 12 years of age, with a booster dose at age 16. Adolescents in this age group with HIV infection should get three doses: 2 doses 2 months apart at 11 or 12 years, plus a booster at age 16. If the first dose (or series) is given between 13 and 15 years of age, the booster should be given between 16 and 18. If the first dose (or series) is given after the 16th birthday, a booster is not needed.

**How can I learn more?**

* Talk to your school nurse
* Call your local or state health department.
* Contact the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC): Call **1-800-232-4636 (1-800-CDC-INFO)** or Visit CDC’s website at **www.cdc.gov/vaccines**

**Websites Useful for Health Services Information**

* [*http://www.adph.org/*](http://www.adph.org/)
* [*www.alsde.edu*](http://www.alsde.edu)
* [*http://www.cdc.gov/*](http://www.cdc.gov/)