Dear Parent:

On behalf of Salve Regina University, I am writing to inform you about meningococcal disease, a rare, but potentially fatal, bacterial infection commonly referred to as *meningitis*, and an immunization recommendation that may affect your college-bound son/daughter.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the American College Health Association (ACHA) have approved new recommendations that urge all first-year students living in residence halls to be immunized against meningococcal disease. The CDC and ACHA recommendations further state that other college students under 25 years of age who wish to reduce their risk for the disease may choose to be vaccinated.

A reformulated meningococcal vaccine ("conjugate") is now available that has the potential to provide longer duration of protection against four of the five strains (or types) of bacteria that cause meningococcal disease—types A, C, Y and W-135.

Due to lifestyle factors, such as crowded living situations, bar patronage, active or passive smoking, irregular sleep patterns, and sharing of personal items, college students living in residence halls are more likely to acquire meningococcal disease than the general college population.

Meningococcal infection is contagious, and progresses very rapidly. It can easily be misdiagnosed as the flu, and, if not treated early, meningitis can lead to death or permanent disabilities. The disease strikes quickly and has devastating complications, including hearing loss, brain damage, limb amputations, loss of kidney function, and in some cases, death.

For more information, please feel free to contact our University Health Services and/or consult your child's physician. You also can find information about the disease and immunization by visiting the Salve Regina University website, www.salve.edu, the ACHA website, www.acha.org/meningitis, and the CDC website, www.cdc.gov/ncidod/diseases/submenus/sub_meningitis.htm.

Sincerely,

Bernadette Gleeson, RNP

Lead Nurse Practitioner of Health Services

Salve Regina University