



**FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®
FOR HEALTHY LIVING
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY**

CAMP CHRISTINA PARENT HANDBOOK SUMMER 2023



OLD COLONY YMCA—STOUGHTON BRANCH
445 Central Street
508.958.3739 | ischneider@oldcolonymca.org
WWW.OLDCOLONYYMCA.ORG

WELCOME, FROM THE CAMP DIRECTOR!

ENSURE A BRIGHTER FUTURE

It is our goal at Camp Christina to provide the building blocks necessary for child development. We purposely hire summer camp counselors who we believe will be positive role models and provide your child with the tools necessary to develop friendships and confidence, set boundaries, and feel empowered. We ensure your children are in a safe community where their best interests are our #1 priority. It is our objective to provide a creative learning environment through our youth programs and activities. to engage, motivate, and boost self-esteem, and to light your child’s individual and unique spark.

We are dedicated to producing a great camp with exceptional role models so you and your child can rest assured that you picked the right place for your summer experience. Those are the experiences and memories that last a lifetime... We are sure you will agree that Camp Christina is the perfect destination for your child and family! The summer camp staff and I are excited to meet your camper! See you all very soon!

Sincerely,
Isabel Schneider, Camp Director

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WELCOME!

Welcome to Old Colony YMCA Camp Christina, where we are for youth development, healthy living, and social responsibility. We are delighted to offer a summer of fun, friendships, exploration, and discovery for children and teens. This handbook is designed to present our policies, procedures, overview of camp, arrival/departure information, important reminders, and communication options.

Camp Christina is licensed by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health and local Board of Health. Parents may request copies of our background check policies, health care policies, and discipline policies as well as procedure for filing grievances.

CAMP CONTACT INFORMATION

FOR EMERGENCIES OR REPORTING ABSENCES

Camp Office | 508.958.3739

Camp Director

Isabel Schneider, ischneider@oldcolonyymca.org | 781-341-2016 x 289
Summer phone 508-649-3271

Senior School Age Director

Jess Edlund, jedlund@oldcolonyymca.org | 508-816-6900

Executive Director

Ellen Greene, egreene@oldcolonyymca.org | 781-341-2016 x 262

Camp Nurse

774-480-4607 | Available by phone June 20th—August 25th Only

*Please note: During the camp day, camp leadership staff are not always available to take your call; however, all messages will be answered in a timely manner.

TUITION / REFUND POLICY

- \$60 registration fee per week per child. This fee is non-refundable.
- Payments must be paid in full no later than June 16, 2023 or upon registration thereafter. **Payments must be paid in full prior to your child attending camp.**
- Tuition refund may be awarded for medical reasons (doctors note required) or relocation of family with proper documentation with director approval. A formal request for refund must be made in writing.

CAMP OVERVIEW

STAFF RATIOS

Staff Ratios —Camper to Staff ratio is 1:10 for campers ages 7 and up. Campers age 4-6 will be in ratios of 1:5.

SWIM TIME

While at Camp Christina, your child will be participating in water fun and safety. This will be the time for the children to cool down throughout their camp days and learn more about being safe in the water!

CAMP LUNCH

Utilize our free lunch program or pack your camper with a lunch! Please be sure you have indicated on the camp forms whether or not you would like to have your child receive camp lunch. All provided lunches are held to Healthy Eating and Physical Activity (HEPA) standards. We cannot refrigerate your child's lunch, please pack your lunch in a cooler. All lunches will be stored in the shade. **WE ARE NOT A PEANUT-FREE CAMP!** If your child has a peanut allergy, please write it on your medical forms. All counselors will be notified and will make sure your child will not be near other children consuming peanut products.

Please provide a variety of snacks for your child. It is a very busy, active day, and lunch alone will typically not suffice.

CHILD SAFETY—WORKING TOGETHER

Everyone shares a responsibility to help keep children safe, ensure their rights are protected and that their needs are met. The safety and wellbeing of the children and youth in our care is our primary concern. Old Colony YMCA has zero tolerance for inappropriate behavior involving children, and we take multiple steps to prevent child sexual abuse within our organization.

STAY IN THE LOOP

- Be sure to stay in the loop by checking your emails for our weekly camp updates!
- This year we'll be relying on ClassDojo to communicate with our families! Stay tuned for more information from our Camp Christina team on connecting to ClassDojo!

OFF HOURS CONTACT BETWEEN STAFF AND CAMPERS

The YMCA prohibits staff members from babysitting for, caring for, providing instruction to, or engaging in a social relationship outside of approved YMCA activities with children (other than family) who participate in YMCA programs or class activities. This policy is designed for the protection of all involved - children, staff members, parents, and the YMCA. If you have further questions, please do not hesitate to talk to with the camp director.

CAMP OPTIONS FOR 2023

BASIC DAY CAMP

- Highlighted in the sample schedule below
- Full week option only
- Adjusted to ensure that your camper has the safest, most fun summer possible
- 9:00am to 4:00pm daily
- Rolling drop-off and pick-up for parent drop off campers

4-WEEK CIT OPTION (15 YEAR OLDS)

Counselors in training (CITs) will have the opportunity to work with our Role Models as mentors while engaging with our campers in a hands on learning environment! CITs will gain additional experience through team building, asset development, service learning projects, and mock interviews. They will also be exposed to various trainings from some of our best YMCA leadership staff, including Listen First and Bully Prevention to name a few!

A TYPICAL DAY AT CAMP CHRISTINA (SAMPLE SCHEDULE)

8:00-9:00am	Extended AM Care (Optional, Additional Cost)
8:50 -9:00am	Parent Drop Off and Bus Arrival
9:00-9:15am	Group welcome and reflection time
9:15-9:30am	Morning Inspiration
9:30-10:30am	Archery
10:30-11:30am	Swimming
11:30am- 12:30pm	Arts and Crafts
12:30-1:30pm	Lunch
1:30-2:30pm	Ropes Course
2:30-3:30pm	Nature
3:30-3:45pm	Group Reflection Time
3:50-4:00pm	Parent Pick Up and Bus Dismissal
4:00-5:00pm	Extended PM Care (Optional, Additional Cost)

CAMP FUN

- **Pool** to splash around with your friends
- An **arts & crafts** activity to invoke creativity
- An **archery range** to enhance your skills and accuracy
- A **Ropes Course** to build teamwork and confidence
- A **sports program** to release your energy
- A **science program** to experiment the unknown
- **Camp spirit** that includes a variety of theme days—visit our website for theme calendar!

SO MANY OPTIONS
ARE AVAILABLE! HELP
YOUR CHILD

LEARN
DEVELOP
ACHIEVE



PREPARING FOR CAMP

CLOTHING

Plan on dressing your camper in comfortable clothes. Be sure the camper is familiar with personal items and can identify them in the event of a loss. Campers **MUST** wear closed-toe shoes that will provide some support and tread (sneakers work best). All clothing should be appropriate for outdoor play. We recommend sending them in clothes that are **OK** to get dirty, as our fun activities sometimes end with a lot of mess! All campers should bring a swimsuit and towel every day.

Label everything with your camper's name, including swim suits, towels, lunch boxes, etc.

BACKPACKS

Backpacks are good for transporting items to and from camp. Please label the backpack with your camper's name! Campers have a designated area to leave their backpack during the day. Backpacks with wheels are often more of a hindrance than a convenience, as they are hard to wheel over the grass, wood chips, and terrain.

LUNCH & SNACKS

Utilize our lunch program or pack your camper with a lunch! Lunches will be left at their group's meeting area. All campers should bring a refillable water bottle as we have water stations available to our campers at all times. Again, there is no refrigeration available, but freezing a water bottle makes a great ice pack and a refreshing afternoon drink!

SUNSCREEN

We ask that you apply sunscreen to your child before you drop them off at camp each morning, and that you provide them with sunscreen to be kept in their backpacks. Sunscreen should also be labeled with your camper's name. Counselors will have campers reapply sunscreen multiple times throughout the day.

BUGSPRAY

We ask that you provide your child with bug spray to be kept in their backpacks. Items should be labeled with your camper's name. Counselors will have campers reapply multiple times throughout the day and depending on the activities they are participating in.

WHAT NOT TO BRING

Camp is a natural setting to retreat from the amenities of electronic technology and to discover self-potential, group dynamics, friendships and nature. Cell phones, iPad/tablets, kindles, Nintendo DS/DSI, MP3 players, iPod, Pokémon or other trading cards, toys, etc. do not fit into the camp setting. Please do not send any valuable or meaningful items to camp with your child; leave these items at home.

LOST & FOUND NOTICE

All lost & found items can be claimed at pick up and drop off. We strongly recommend labeling all camper items. Reminder: Campers need to leave their personal belongings and electronics at home. They are **NOT PERMITTED** at camp. **The Y and our staff will not be responsible for lost, stolen, or damaged electronics or other items.**

IMPORTANT REMINDERS

PHYSICALS AND IMMUNIZATIONS

Up to date physical and immunization reports must be on file **BEFORE** the child attends his/her first day of camp! Children will be unable to attend camp if these reports are not on file. **HEALTH FORMS:** All required health forms must be completed in the registration packet. In accordance with state regulations, no child will be permitted to be at camp without all required documentation completed.

PHOTO NOTICE

The following photo release is contained in the camp application you have filled out for your camper(s). "It is understood and agreed that Old Colony Y reserves the right to take and utilize pictures, likenesses, videos, and testimonials of participants for promotional purposes including, but not limited to, reports, publications, brochures, emails, our website and other instances of online presence in perpetuity." If for any reason you do not want your child photographed, please be sure that you have written **"DO NOT PHOTO"** on the application.

RAINY DAYS and EXTREME HEAT

Rain Days: We ask parents to plan ahead as indoor space is limited. When inclement weather hits, our campers will be asked to move indoors and stay in one specific area of the building if necessary.

In the case of extreme heat, we utilize all shaded areas, implement extra swim/water activities, and we utilize indoors spaces to move some activities inside with A/C. We do request that you prepare your camper with clothes/gear for all weather. Camp leadership staff will make decisions during inclement weather to ensure safety for all campers.

MEDICAL CONCERNS

Care plan for Mildly Ill Campers

When a camper feels ill, the responsible counselor will remove the child from activities to determine whether the child is over-heated or over-tired. If after a period of time, the child still feels ill, the responsible counselor will take him/her to the nurse's station. After discussion and examination the camp nurse will determine if the child should be separated and lie down for a while, or if the parent should be called to pick up the child. The child who is not sent home will remain in the nurse's station until recovered to a point where he/she can rejoin regular camp activities.

Plan For Administering Medication

1. When a camper needs either prescription or non-prescription medication administered during camp time, the parent will fill out and sign the authorization to administered medication to a camper form. This form will be given to Camp Director or Nurse, along with the medication in its original container bearing the pharmacy label (showing prescription number, date filled and prescriber's name, name of medication, directions for use and patient's name). In the case of non-prescribed medication, the parent will write out and sign detailed instructions for dosages.
2. The camper's counselor will take the instructions and medications to the camp nurse, who will lock the medication in the storage cabinet (or put in refrigerator, as is appropriate) and log in the information on the child's daily log for medication administration.
3. When it is time for administration of the medication, the child's counselor will take him/her to the nurse's station to receive the medication from the camp nurse, who will log in each day's administration on an individual Daily Log of Medication Administration Form.
4. When no longer needed or at the end of camp, medications will be returned to the parents via the counselor or will be destroyed (parents will indicate in their written instructions which they prefer).

We do recognize that inhalers and epi-pens may need to travel around camp with the camper. If this is the case, our nurse will work with parents on determining the best plan for storage/travel of the medication. Please feel free to contact our nurse with your concerns.

Plan of Emergency Care

In the event that a camper requires immediate emergency care a camp counselor, camp nurse, or camp director will begin EAP by dialing 911.

Campers will be brought to the nearest available hospital. Most emergency will be transported to: **Good Samaritan Medical Hospital** at 235 N Pearl St, Brockton, MA 02301. Phone: 508-427-3000

ATTENDANCE POLICIES

Attendance is taken at the beginning of every day. If a child shows up late, you will need to bring them to the office to check in. If your child will be missing a day, please call the camp office.

ATTENTION PARENTS

ALL persons **INCLUDING PARENTS** picking up campers must have a **PICTURE ID and be listed as authorized on your registration form.** This is necessary to maintain the highest of safety standards.

CAMP ARRIVAL INFO

Extended AM Care 8:00–9:00am AND Parent Drop Off 8:50 – 9:00am

Please follow the route as designated by your camp team. A camp staff will escort your child to his or her group. All drop off will be rolling.

Bus

Please arrive at the bus stop 10 minutes prior to your buses scheduled departure. A staff member will meet you at a designated area to check your camper in. Buses will arrive at camp at 9am and all campers will be escorted to their groups to be checked in. *All bus times are approximate and stop locations are subject to change.

Late Drop Offs

All late drop offs **MUST CALL** the camp office (508-958-3739) and bring your camper to the camp office to check in. It is crucial to make every effort to follow your drop off time.

EARLY DISMISSAL

- No child may leave the camp grounds for early dismissal without his/her parent or guardian signing him/her out in front of the camp with a leadership staff present.
- All early dismissals **MUST CALL** the camp office to be checking in and a staff member will meet you at a designated area with the camper(s).
- If a child is to be released early, we must be informed in writing or by phone call.
- **DUE TO DISMISSAL PROCEDURES: NO CAMPER WILL BE DISMISSED BETWEEN 3:00–3:45PM**

CAMP DEPARTURE INFO

Traditional Camp Pick Up—3:50–4:00pm AND Extended PM Care 4:00–5:00pm

Parent pick up will resemble parent drop off as it will be a rolling pick up procedure. Parents will enter the parking lot at Camp Christina with an ID ready. Parents will proceed to same location as drop off to sign out camper. Once ID is confirmed, camper will be escorted to the car by a YMCA camp staff.

Bus Pick up:

An authorized person must be present at the bus stop with an ID. If you are not present for the camper, he/she will be brought back to camp for dismissal. *All bus times are approximate and stop locations are subject to change.

Late Pick Ups

Late pick ups will not be permitted at camp. All campers must be picked up by 4:00 pm (or 5:00 pm if registered for Extended PM care). Any late pick ups will be charged an additional \$1.00 per minute. Inability to consistently pick up camper on time will result in termination of care.

WALKERS

A waiver must be signed to allow your child to walk or bike to and from camp or a bus stop with approval from the Camp Director. Child must be 12 years of age or older.

BUS TRANSPORTATION AND SAFETY

Camp Christina Stoughton bus requirements are as follows:

- Two (2) buses for services Monday—Friday, June 26—August 18, 2023
- Buses must arrive and depart all site at times specified. No leaving early.
- Bus drivers will adhere to all YMCA expectations for customer service.
- After the route is completed, buses will return camper to camp if no parent/guardian is present at drop-off

2023 BUS SCHEDULE

Bus #1				
Easton/Holbrook/Brockton		AM	PM	Meeting Areas
A	Shaw's Plaza (Depot St.)	8:00am	5:05pm	Front parking lot
B	E-Market (Washington St.)	8:10am	4:50pm	Front parking lot
C	Westgate Mall (Staples)	8:20am	4:40pm	Front parking lot
D	Holbrook High School	8:30am	4:25pm	Main Entrance
E	Avon High School	8:40am	4:15pm	Main Entrance
	YMCA	9:00am	4:10pm	

Bus #2 Randolph/Canton				
		AM	PM	Meeting Areas
A	Randolph High School	8:00am	5:05pm	Pool Entrance Lot (left)
B	Randolph Middle School	8:10am	4:50pm	Front Entrance
C	Hansen Elementary (Canton)	8:20am	4:40pm	Front Entrance
D	Canton High School	8:25am	4:30pm	Front of Rodman Administration Building
E	Cobbs Corner (Flowers by Ami)	8:30am	4:25pm	Front parking lot
	YMCA	8:50am	4:10pm	

Please arrive at the bus stop **at least 10 minutes prior** to your buses' scheduled arrival or departure time. It is important to have all parents and campers at the bus stop to ensure an efficient bus route. Please note that a child may not be left alone while waiting for the bus. A parent or guardian must be with the child to ensure proper safety. If your child is a "walker" and will be arriving and departing the stop alone, please be aware that you take full responsibility for their safety. The Old Colony YMCA is not responsible for the children until they are safely on the bus or signed out at the end of the day.

The opportunity to ride on the camp bus is a privilege that can be revoked if behavior issues occur on the bus. We expect campers to conduct themselves in an appropriate manner, which includes:

- No yelling on the bus
- No destruction of the bus or personal property
- No food or beverage consumption while on the bus
- Remaining seated at all times

Please make sure you discuss proper bus behavior with your camper prior to the start of camp to ensure a safe and successful camp season. Unruly behavior, destruction of bus or personal property, or endangering the safety of the bus riders may result in exclusion of that person from using the bus.

ASSET DEVELOPMENT AT CAMP CHRISTINA

Camping experiences hold tremendous opportunities to build developmental assets. They take young people away from their everyday environment and create an asset-rich experience for the campers, linking them with caring adults and older youth, engaging them in stimulating, challenging activities, developing leadership skills, and cultivating positive peer relationships. Though individual camper experiences varied, a major study of camps by the **American Camping Association** found that overall, children, parents, and camp staff all reported improvements in positive identity, social skills, physical and thinking skills, and positive values and spirituality.

CAMP CHRISTINA IS DEDICATED TO INTEGRATE ASSET DEVELOPMENT THIS SUMMER BY

- Creating ways for young people to build meaningful relationships, including **getting-to-know-you activities** and community-building activities.
- Being clear about **boundaries and expectations**. At camp, we create a list of rules and expectations and enable the campers to offer their ideas.
- Recognizing that some young people may not have much **experience with camping**. They may resist trying certain camping activities because of their inexperience—or their fear of failure.
- **Empowering young people by giving them choices** during activities. For example, if you have a craft activity, having two or three possible outcomes that use the same materials.
- Integrating responsibility and a **service project** into your camp activities. We ask that the children pick up after themselves, especially after lunch time. We also have the CIT group help throughout camp.
- Expecting camp counselors to be **role models**. We train them about this critical aspect of their role and how important it is for them to exhibit positive behaviors to campers.
- Engaging young people in **leadership** roles in our camp, particularly the CIT program. Veteran campers can be mentors for first-time campers.
- **Emphasizing an experiential educational aspect** to our program.
- Our goal is to inspire teachable moments throughout a camper's day that will keep their minds engaged while having fun. Sending your child to camp will enable them to stay on track through creative positive learning experiences. The Y recognizes that all children experience learning losses when they do not engage in educational activities during the summer. We provide building blocks necessary for a child's development.

FAMILY STRENGTHENING AT THE STOUGHTON Y ALL YEAR!

Y FAMILY NIGHTS (June 19th, July 13th, July 27th, August 10th , from 5:30–7:30)

Serving families has always been at the heart of the Y. We are a place they can find respite from social, economic and educational challenges, and learn how to overcome them. We desire for every family to build stronger bonds, achieve a greater work/life balance, and become more engaged within the community. Throughout the summer we will have family nights for the whole family to experience camp!

YMCA MEMBERSHIPS Save you money

We hope that you will consider joining us as a member of the YMCA. If you are interested in becoming a member and benefiting from our savings on program rates, please contact our Membership Experience team for more information. You can still join ongoing monthly membership to get the reduced member camp fee!

Senior Program Director for Membership:

Nelson Fernandez

Email: Ncruzfernandez@oldcolonyymca.org

Phone: 781-341-2016 x 236

MANAGING CHALLENGING BEHAVIORS

Part of healthy youth development includes learning how to get along with others, managing conflicts, and working together as a team. Camp provides the ideal setting for these skills to develop. All types of youth come to Y camp. Some are excited to be there and adapt readily to the activities and excitement of the day, but other youth may be nervous or anxious about the camp experience. When youth are struggling in the camp setting, we want to do all that we can to help them have a positive experience.

Our philosophy of behavior management is that children do not want to act out or lose control. In fact, challenging behaviors sometimes occur when a youth needs extra attention, does not feel safe, or needs help managing overwhelming feelings. Our goal is to work with your child to provide them with the support they need to make a more positive adjustment to camp.

In support of this goal, we have a clinician and several behavior support specialists on staff who work in conjunction with the counselors to support all campers through difficult moments through making behavior plans, communicating with parents, and our restorative justice practices.

NOTE: Emergency and safety concerns are handled immediately. This includes: runaways, fights, assaults, fire setting, serious threat of violence or suicide.

RESTORATIVE JUSTICE FRAMEWORK

Restorative Justice is a system of formal and informal processes that build and sustain a culture of kindness, respect, responsibility and justice. This is achieved through emphasizing the importance of trusting relationships as central to building community and repairing relationships when harm has occurred.

Restorative Justice brings persons harmed by misbehavior and the person who harmed them, along with affected family and community members, together in dialogue that aims to build understanding, explore how the actions has impacted those involved, including the community, and develop agreements for what will be done to make things right. The result: truly meaningful justice for all involved.

At Camp:

When a campers experience conflict, a counselor will bring the two campers together to mediate a circle discussion. We ask all parties involved:

- What happened?
- How do you feel about what happened?
- What do you need moving forward?

This approach enhances accountability for one's actions, and will encourage campers to engage in collaborative problem-solving. It builds systems that address misbehavior and harm in a way that strengthens relationships and focuses on the harm done rather than only rule-breaking.

We are using the restorative justice framework to help heal harm, mitigate future harm, and build community.

ROLE OF PARENTS/GUARDIANS

We hope to work in partnership with you to help ensure that your child has a positive camp experience. There are several things you can do to help in this process:

Talk to your child about the camp experience. Ask them to describe the activities. Ask who their friends are and what their counselor is like. While children often respond to the question, "What did you do at camp today?" with "Nothing," we assure you that a lot of things happen at camp. Sometimes campers are too tired after the camp day, but they may be talkative on the morning ride or waiting for the bus. If your child is not having fun at camp, it may be difficult for the child to tell you or to give you reasons why. Specific questions may be helpful. Some things you might wish to ask include: "Are you worried that something bad will happen at camp? What comes to mind when you say you don't like camp? Is there anyone at camp you can talk to?"

Reassure your child. Children get anxious just like adults. They may worry about disappointing you. They may wish they could stay at home during the summer. They may have fears about swimming or bugs or not living up to your expectations.

Being a parent is hard. There are many difficult decisions to make. You don't want to overreact to situations because you know that many concerning behaviors are normal, but you don't want to fail to get your child help if it is needed. If your child indicates they are having a bad experience or they refuse to talk about camp and you have concerns, please contact us. **Do not diminish your child's concerns.** Your child may be exposed to behaviors that the child has not seen or experienced before. Our camps are very diverse. We have children with developmental disabilities and from all walks of life. We have children attend camp who may have serious behavioral problems or who have experienced traumatic life events. For the most part, this exposure is part of growing up and can be a positive experience as children learn how to deal with all types of people. But it is not good if your child is scared or doesn't feel safe. Again, we encourage you to contact us and come in to speak with us about the situation that may be troubling your child.

YOUTH VALUES PLEDGE & ANTI-BULLYING PLEDGE

Please review with your child the following values pledge and anti-bullying pledge.

VALUES PLEDGE

I promise to be respectful of other people's feelings, property and body.

I promise to be responsible for my everyday duties, the things I use, and the areas I use.

I promise to be honest when I make mistakes and honest when I have not done what I was responsible for.

I promise to be respectful of the YMCA and the after-school program rules.

I promise to be an all around caring person to those who participate in the YMCA Program and the people in the YMCA building.

ANTI-BULLYING PLEDGE

We are all friends at the Y.

We will not bully others.

We will help others who are being bullied by speaking out and by getting adult help.

We will use extra effort to include all others in activities.

We will display the core values of Caring, Honesty, Respect and Responsibility.

CAMP'S RESPONSE TO BEHAVIOR ISSUES

Our goal is to work together with our staff and with parents to do all we can to help your child and all children have a positive camp experience. That being said, there are some behaviors that are very serious. Hitting, bullying, cursing, and running away are all behaviors we will want to address with parents. In general, we do all that we can to avoid dismissing a child from camp. However, when we do have serious issues, it is critical that parents work with us to address the behavior. Campers that acquire three written documentations are not succeeding in our camp environment and care will be terminated.

Meningococcal Disease and Camp Attendees: Commonly Asked Questions

What is meningococcal disease?

Meningococcal disease is caused by infection with bacteria called *Neisseria meningitidis*. These bacteria can infect the tissue (the “meninges”) that surrounds the brain and spinal cord and cause meningitis, or they may infect the blood or other organs of the body. Symptoms of meningococcal disease may appear suddenly. Fever, severe and constant headache, stiff neck or neck pain, nausea and vomiting, and rash can all be signs of meningococcal disease. Changes in behavior such as confusion, sleepiness, and trouble waking up can also be important symptoms. In the US, about 350-550 people get meningococcal disease each year and 10-15% die despite receiving antibiotic treatment. Of those who survive, about 10-20% may lose limbs, become hard of hearing or deaf, have problems with their nervous system, including long term neurologic problems, or have seizures or strokes. Less common presentations include pneumonia and arthritis.

How is meningococcal disease spread?

These bacteria are passed from person-to-person through saliva (spit). You must be in close contact with an infected person’s saliva in order for the bacteria to spread. Close contact includes activities such as kissing, sharing water bottles, sharing eating/drinking utensils or sharing cigarettes with someone who is infected; or being within 3-6 feet of someone who is infected and is coughing and sneezing.

Who is most at risk for getting meningococcal disease?

People who travel to certain parts of the world where the disease is very common, microbiologists, people with HIV infection, and those exposed to meningococcal disease during an outbreak are at risk for meningococcal disease. Children and adults with damaged or removed spleens or persistent complement component deficiency (an inherited immune disorder) are at risk. Adolescents and people who live in certain settings, such as college freshmen living in dormitories and military recruits, are at greater risk of disease from some of the serotypes.

Are camp attendees at increased risk for meningococcal disease?

Children attending day or residential camps are **not** considered to be at an increased risk for meningococcal disease because of their participation.

Is there a vaccine against meningococcal disease?

Yes, there are 2 different meningococcal vaccines. Quadrivalent meningococcal conjugate vaccine (Menactra and Menveo) protects against 4 serotypes (A, C, W and Y) of meningococcal disease. Meningococcal serogroup B vaccine (Bexsero and Trumenba) protects against serogroup B meningococcal disease, for age 10 and older.

Should my child or adolescent receive meningococcal vaccine?

That depends. Meningococcal conjugate vaccine is routinely recommended at age 11-12 years with a booster at age 16. In addition, these vaccines may be recommended for children with certain high-risk health conditions, such as those described above. Otherwise, meningococcal vaccine is **not** recommended for attendance at camps.

Meningococcal serogroup B vaccine (Bexsero and Trumenba) is recommended for people with certain relatively rare high-risk health conditions (examples: persons with a damaged spleen or whose spleen has been removed, those with persistent complement component deficiency (an inherited disorder), and people who may have been exposed during an outbreak). Adolescents and young adults (16 through 23 years of age) who do not have high risk conditions **may** be vaccinated with a serogroup B meningococcal vaccine, preferably at 16 through 18 years of age, to provide short term protection for most strains of serogroup B meningococcal disease. Parents of adolescents and children who are at higher risk of infection, because of certain medical conditions or other circumstances, should discuss vaccination with their child’s healthcare provider.

How can I protect my child or adolescent from getting meningococcal disease?

The best protection against meningococcal disease and many other infectious diseases is thorough and frequent handwashing, respiratory hygiene and cough etiquette. Individuals should:

- wash their hands often, especially after using the toilet and before eating or preparing food (hands should be washed with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand gel or rub may be used if hands are not visibly dirty).
- cover their nose and mouth with a tissue when coughing or sneezing and discard the tissue in a trash can; if they don’t have a tissue, cough or sneeze into their upper sleeve.
- not share food, drinks or eating utensils with other people, especially if they are ill.
- contact their healthcare provider immediately if they have symptoms of meningococcal disease.

If your child is exposed to someone with meningococcal disease, antibiotics may be recommended to keep your child from getting sick.

You can obtain more information about meningococcal disease or vaccination from your healthcare provider, your local Board of Health (listed in the phone book under government), or the Massachusetts Department of Public Health Division of Epidemiology and Immunization at (617) 983-6800 or on the MDPH website at www.mass.gov/dph.

