

Deer Creek Middle School Student Handbook 2025-2026



School Phone: (405)348-4830

TITLE	NAME	CONTACT INFORMATION
Principal	Jenny Richards	jennyrichards@dcsok.org
Assistant Principal - 7th/8th grade	Carla Stone	carlayoung@dcsok.org
Assistant Principal - 8th grade	Taylor Upchurch	taylorupchurch@dcsok.org
Assistant Principal - 7th grade	Marcus Smith	marcussmith@dcsok.org
Athletic Director	Yohance Brown	yohancebrown@dcsok.org

WELCOME

Welcome to Deer Creek Middle School. We want you to become an integral part of our Antler tradition and activities. Our success as a school and your personal success depend on your efforts. Let us always have the spirit to do the things which will make this an outstanding school and an excellent year. The information presented here is designed to help you achieve success this year.

In order to have an organized school that functions smoothly, it is imperative to establish student policies. The following policies and procedures are not designed to limit your freedom. These policies and procedures are designed to give every student the opportunity to learn in a climate conducive to learning. Please study these policies and procedures in order to know what is expected of you while attending Deer Creek Middle School. A complete listing of District Policies can be found on the Deer Creek School District Website. Each policy has been assigned to a particular section such as Attendance (*JED*). Section Titles which represent a District Policy will be placed in italics: Attendance (*JED*)

-DISTRICT MISSION-

We are committed to learning and personal growth for every Antler.

SCHOOL CREED

I am a Deer Creek Antler.

I am Safe,

I am Respectful,

And I am Responsible in all areas of my life.

I am a Deer Creek Antler, and this is

THE ANTLER WAY.

THE ANTLER WAY

Be Safe

Be Respectful

Be Responsible

GENERAL INFORMATION

DEER CREEK SCHOOL DISTRICT BOARD POLICY GOALS FOR STUDENTS: Students are the first concern of the District and must receive the primary attention of the Board and all staff members. To fulfill its obligations to students, the Board will strive to spend most of its time in formulating policy and considering other matters related to students. A similar commitment is expected of all staff members. In pursuing this primary goal, it is imperative that the good of the individual student be kept paramount. Each student shall be considered and treated with respect as an individual. One of the major tasks of the educational program shall be to assist each student in becoming self-sufficient in utilizing decision making processes and techniques, eventually becoming responsible for determining his or her own learning purposes and the means for achieving them. Staff members shall seek to be wise counselors of children and youth and skillful facilitators of learning. To this end, the Board and staff shall work together to establish an environment conducive to the very best learning achievement for each student.

Annual Parent Notifications [-Meningitis](#), [Family Rights and Privacy Act \(FERPA\)](#), Asbestos Policy(see below), [Type 1 Diabetes](#)

Click the link below to view all district policies regarding students, such as:

Link: [Deer Creek Board Policies](#)
[Alcohol, Tobacco, Drug Policy](#)
[Child abuse and neglect reporting](#)
[Attendance Policy](#)
[Bullying Policy](#)
[Bus Behavior](#)
[Chronic Absenteeism](#)
[Dress Code](#)
[Drug Testing Policy](#)
[Electronic Device](#)
[List of Student Behaviors \(from Board Policy\)](#)
[Medicine Policy](#)
[OSSAA Eligibility](#)
[School Insurance](#)
[School Visitor Policy](#)
[Search Policy](#)
[Sexual Harassment](#)
[Student Suspension and Due Process](#)
[Title IX - Description and Process](#)
[Technology Use Policy](#)
[Weapons Policy](#)

ANTLER WAY EXPECTATIONS

DCMS Students will be taught our Antler Way expectations on a regular basis. We expect our students to Be Safe, Be Respectful and Be Responsible in all areas of our school.

1. All students are expected to respect themselves, the rights of other students, and to show respect to all teachers and school personnel.
2. Each student is expected to display good sportsmanship at all school sponsored activities.
3. In the interest of a safe and orderly climate, there should be no running, pushing, or shoving on the school grounds.
4. Each student is expected to do their part in keeping the school, cafeteria, and gym clean.
5. No student has the option to interfere with the right of other students to learn or with a teacher's right to teach.

ASBESTOS NOTIFICATION

The Asbestos Hazard Emergency Response Act of 1986 (AHERA) required the inspection of all buildings in the school district for asbestos. The District has complied with this act. A management plan documenting these inspections is on file for public review. Upon request you may view the plan, which is located at the superintendent's office and at each campus.

The DEER CREEK PUBLIC SCHOOLS annually notifies all parents, teachers, and other employees by posting this notice. Additionally, information regarding any asbestos related activities, planned or in progress, will be disseminated by posting a notice, or using handout bulletins, e-mails, flyers and/or using school newsletters.

The asbestos identified in our management plan will be checked regularly by a licensed asbestos company and by our staff to scrutinize any changes in the material, which could cause a health hazard. We will continue to monitor the asbestos as defined by EPA guidelines. If changes occur, our asbestos coordinator will notify the appropriate people as described by law.

BACKPACKS/BAGS/PURSES

Students may bring backpacks/bags/purses to school and may bring them into classrooms. We will assign a locker for students, but it is optional to use.

BUS TRANSPORTATION

Students are required to present their badge for scanning every time they load and unload the bus. All transportation information is linked on the [district website](#).

1. Students are required to present their badge for scanning every time they load and unload the bus.
2. Transportation will always pick up any student at a bus stop even if they do not have their badge.

3. Students will be given a warning to bring their badge with them if they board the bus without a badge. They will be transported to and from school on that day. If the student boards the bus for a second day without a badge, they will again be given a warning and reminded that they must have a badge on the third day or bus service will not be provided from the school to their home. Additionally, a notice is sent to the parents via the My Ride K-12 app and the school will be notified to remind the student.
4. If a student has been given two consecutive warnings and rides to school on the third day without a badge their parent or guardian will be called to pick them up at school. Bus service will not be provided until the student has purchased a replacement badge.
5. Students are not allowed to repeatedly violate the badge system. If a student doesn't have or refuses to provide their badge for two consecutive days and then has it on the third day over and over, this will result in disciplinary action for not following district policies.
6. If a student reports that they have lost their badge, or if it becomes damaged to a point where it no longer works, they must purchase a new badge for \$10 from My School Bucks. Please note: the school office staff will notify transportation when the new badge is requested and a new badge will be issued and sent to the bus driver or school for the student. This process can take from 1-3 days depending on when the badge is paid for, however, once the badge is paid for the student will be allowed to ride the bus again. Badge purchases are checked daily at approximately 10 a.m., any badge purchased after that time will not be accounted for until the next day.
7. If a student boards the wrong bus in the morning, the driver will inform them as they board the bus that they do not ride this bus and give them correct bus information. If you have given them the correct bus information and they continue to try and ride the bus, that is a discipline issue and will be written up and handled by the Transportation Assistant Director. Students will also not be transported home on the wrong bus. If a student boards the wrong bus at school, they will be given the correct bus to ride and/or sent to the office to have their parents pick them up if they refuse to get on the correct bus or it has departed.
8. Some parents require a student to occasionally ride home on another bus. If a student is an extra rider, the driver will be notified by message on their tablet before their afternoon route.
9. If a student has been riding the bus and the badge system says they are not a rider the driver will notify transportation so we can verify they are correctly assigned in the computer. If they are not marked as a bus rider, transportation will correct the issue.

BAND INSTRUMENTS

Band instruments left at school at night and on holidays are not the responsibility of the school. Instruments should be taken home at night and on holidays.

CAMERAS

Cameras are only allowed under strict teacher supervision. Inappropriate use of cameras such as taking pictures of other students, staff, families, etc. without their permission, taking pictures in restrooms and locker rooms, and/or taking inappropriate pictures that cause a disruption to the school day will result in suspension.

CHEATING

Whenever a student is guilty of academic dishonesty, the teacher shall collect the student's paper, mark a zero in their process skills grade for the week, and notify the parent and office as soon as possible as to the action taken. The parent shall be notified that a second offense will bring placement in In-School-Intervention. Any verbal or nonverbal communication or disruption during an exam or copying assignments may result in disciplinary action and a zero. Any student that has a cell phone out, whether they are using or not, may be considered cheating and will result in disciplinary action.

CHROMEBOOKS

The mission of the 1:1 Student Device Initiative in Deer Creek Public Schools is to help propel our personalized learning initiatives and establish the foundation for a seamless program that supports individualized instruction in our classrooms. It supports anytime access to online resources for learning by providing portable devices for all students in grades PreK-12. This ensures that students can access what they need from wherever they are.

The focus of the Student Device program at Deer Creek Public Schools is to provide tools and resources for the 21st Century learner. Excellence in education requires that technology is integrated seamlessly throughout the educational curricula. Increasing access to technology is essential to build upon college and career readiness skills. The individual use of student devices is a way to empower students to maximize their full potential and prepare them for college and the workplace.

Click [HERE](#) for the Deer Creek DC:1 Purpose Handbook

CURRICULUM

All core courses at Deer Creek Middle School follow the Oklahoma Academic Standards. All curriculum guides are updated on a regular basis. School and District curriculum information is available on the district website by clicking [HERE](#).

DISCIPLINE OF STUDENTS

We reserve the right to take any appropriate action on events which may not directly appear within the guidelines of the handbook in order to provide a safe and secure environment for DCMS. All efforts have been made in order to provide a comprehensive guide of our school rules and policies, but unforeseen circumstances will be dealt with in accordance with administrative interpretation.

District Policies Regarding Student Behavior and Discipline:

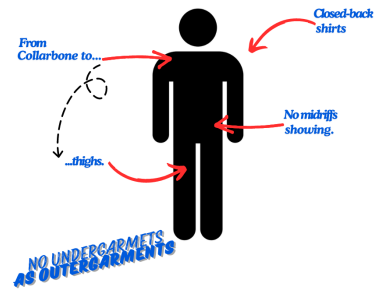
Link: [Deer Creek Board Policies](#)

DRESS CODE

It is hoped that parents and students will use mature judgment and good taste in complying with these minimal restrictions. Grooming and dress at Deer Creek Schools must not constitute a distraction or interfere with the educational opportunities of students.

Expectations:

1. Above the chest to below the pelvic region (upper and lower torso) including buttocks, should be covered at all times.
2. Shorts, dresses, tunics, tops worn with leggings, and skirts should be a length that sufficiently covers all private parts.
3. Any school issued uniform may be worn during the school day if the uniform meets the above dress code requirements.



Prohibited on School Property:

1. Bare feet, house shoes/slippers
2. Bike or animal chains, collars or spikes
3. Apparel that is too tight, too loose, too sheer, too short or too revealing, including but not limited to: crop tops, mini-skirts, short shorts, skirts with slits, exposed or visible underwear, outer garments that look like underwear, muscle shirts, mesh/sheer shirts without a T-shirt underneath, and low-cut clothes, including attire that exposes the chest or breasts.
4. Apparel or accessories with offensive or suggestive slogans, logos, symbols, or images that pertain to immorality, vulgarity, obscenity, nudity, promotion of violence and/or gang or cult activity, or that advertises or promotes dangerous weapons, tobacco, alcoholic beverages, illegal chemical substances, drug-related items, drug paraphernalia or other items or activities that are illegal for the general population or for minors.
5. Hats, hoodies, and head coverings are not allowed on elementary/intermediate school campuses (grades PreK—6th) except on designated days as determined by each site principal.

Where a bona fide religious belief or health need of a student conflicts with the school dress code, reasonable accommodation shall be provided. Any student desiring accommodation shall notify the school principal in writing of the requested accommodation and the factual basis for the request.

Any variation to the above dress code will be subject to the approval of the principal.

DRUG TESTING POLICY

Participation in school sponsored extra-curricular activities at the Deer Creek School District is a privilege. Activity Students carry a responsibility to themselves, their fellow students, their parents, and their school to set the highest possible examples of conduct, which includes avoiding the use or possession of illegal and performance-enhancing drugs.

Drug use of any kind is incompatible with participation in extra-curricular activities on behalf of the Deer Creek Public School District. For the safety, health, and well being of the student of the Deer Creek Public School District, the Deer Creek Public School District has adopted the attached [Activity Student Drug Testing Policy](#) and the Student Drug Testing Consent for use by all Activity Students.

ELECTRONIC DEVICE POLICY

In accordance with newly passed 2025 state legislation, personal electronic devices (cell phones, AirPods, smartwatches, fitbits, shuffles, gaming devices, etc.) will be prohibited during school hours, *including passing periods and lunch*. This means ALL personal devices are not allowed to be used from 7:30am - 2:55pm.

The district-issued device is the ONLY device allowed to be used on campus between 7:30am - 2:55pm. Wired earbuds are *only* allowed when directed by the teacher for testing, educational videos, etc.

[Detailed information about this policy is available online.](#)

Students may use personal electronic devices while on the school bus as long as they adhere to the provisions stated within the board policy.

ELIGIBILITY

The Oklahoma Secondary Schools Activities Association (OSSAA) rules state that, in order to participate in any extracurricular activity the following eligibility requirements must be met:

1. Beginning of the school year:

- a) A student must pass six (6) of the seven (7) classes they were enrolled in the previous year.
- b) A student new to the district, moving from a six period day, must have passed five (5) of the classes they completed the previous semester.

2. During the year:

DCMS ELECTRONIC DEVICE CONSEQUENCES

Violation	Consequence
1	Student escorted to office and device locked up until end of day; student picks up device
2	Student escorted to office and device locked up until end of day; guardian must pick up
3	Student escorted to office and device locked up until end of day; guardian must pick up; 1 day of ISI
4	Student escorted to office and device locked up until end of day; guardian must pick up; 2 days of ISI
5	1 day of Out of School Suspension; device checked-in each morning in the office for the remainder of the year



Board Policy JFCK - Student Use of Electronic Devices

All personal electronic devices are to remain OFF AND OUT OF SIGHT during the school day.

- a) A student must be passing all classes.
- b) A student must maintain a 2.0 GPA.
- c) Both semester grades and process skills are used to determine eligibility.

Eligibility for music performances will be taken three (3) weeks prior to a scheduled performance.

Eligibility will be taken on Thursday of the fourth complete week each semester and every Thursday thereafter. Coaches will meet with ineligible students on the following Friday. It is the student's responsibility to share the information with their parents. It is also the responsibility of the parents to check the students' grades on-line. The first week a student is failing any class; they will be placed on probation and allowed to participate in the following week. If they are failing any class the second week in a row, they will be declared ineligible and will be unable to participate in any extra-curricular activity the following week.

FOOD AND DRINK

No outside food and drinks are allowed in the academic areas of the building (classrooms and hallways). Food and drink brought to school for lunch must be placed in a locker or kept away in a backpack. Any drinks or food brought to school should be consumed in the cafeteria before school or at lunch. Water is allowed in the classrooms. This limitation is due to food allergies of students and staff as well as the overall cleanliness of the building.

GRADING POLICIES

Within the first two (2) weeks of school, a syllabus for each class will be posted on Canvas explaining the requirements and grading procedures for the class. Grades are available online through Infinite Campus. Only semester grades will be recorded on the permanent records. The semester grade is a cumulative grade for the entire semester and not an average of the two nine weeks.

The following scale is used for reporting grades:

- A - (90-100)
- B - (80-89)
- C - (70-79)
- D - (69-60)
- F - (59 and below)

If a student begins to fail (has a D or F grade point average) parents will be notified.

GUIDANCE

The purpose of the guidance program is to help each individual student achieve his/her highest growth mentally, emotionally, and socially. We try to do this in several ways:

1. Helping the new student feel at home in our school with new teachers and friends in a different setting
2. Individual conferences whenever a student, a teacher, a parent, or the counselor deems it necessary

3. Health and Wellness
4. The counselor welcomes the opportunity to talk things over with any student, parent, or teacher.
5. Counselors are divided by grade level and loop up with students for the 2 years they are at the middle school. This ensures a strong student/family connection with their counselor during middle school years.

LUNCH

All information pertaining to school nutrition may be found [HERE](#) on the District website.

In order to limit outside guests from entering the building, we ask that only family members/guardians deliver lunch for their own child. **We are not able to accommodate companies such as *DoorDash* or *GrubHub*, etc to deliver to our students.**

MEDIA CENTER

The Media Center is located in the center area of the school and is open to serve students during normal school hours. The Media Center is designed to encourage students' love of reading and to serve as an information center. The Media Center is staffed by a media specialist. The Media Center is fully automated to include a computerized check-out system and card catalog. Overdue notices will be sent to students if books are not returned on time. Materials can be checked out for a two week period. If books are late beyond that, parents are notified and encouraged to help locate them. Students are financially responsible for lost or damaged library books. The Media Center sponsors an annual book fair and poster sale.

PARENT CONFERENCES

DCMS encourages open communication between the school and home. Parent conferences are scheduled within the school calendar. Parents are invited to schedule conferences on these days, as well as at any needed time throughout the school year. Email is the quickest and most efficient way to contact a teacher to set up a conference.

PUBLIC DISPLAY OF AFFECTION: PDA

Public displays of affection are not appropriate in the classroom, halls, on school grounds, or during any activity both on-site and off-site. Violators will receive disciplinary action. PDA includes but is not limited to hand holding, prolonged hugging, kissing or inappropriate touching.

PROFICIENCY BASED PROMOTION

Upon request, a student will be given the opportunity to demonstrate proficiency in one or more areas of the core curriculum. Students demonstrating proficiency in a core curriculum area will be given credit for their learning and will be given the opportunity to advance to the next level of study in the appropriate curriculum area. Testing is scheduled through the District Curriculum Office with the Curriculum Director and our site testing coordinator.

RETAKES (SUMMATIVE)

Test retakes are allowed for summative assessments for full credit, pending completed qualifiers. After taking a summative assessment, students have the opportunity to advocate for a retake. All retake opportunities are subject to the teacher's discretion. Retakes will occur up to one week after the original test date. Our goal is for the student to learn the content, therefore they will earn full credit of what they demonstrate on the retake.

SCHEDULE CHANGES

Every effort is made to accommodate all pre-enrolled student class requests. The master schedule is built on these requests. After the school year has begun, schedule changes will only be made in exceptional cases and when class size limits will not be exceeded. HS credit classes and honors math courses can be changed within the 1st 6 weeks of school or at semester break. Options may be limited with these days.

SCHOOL CLUBS AND ORGANIZATIONS

Deer Creek Middle School strives to offer a variety of opportunities in which our students may participate. The mission of these clubs and organizations is to provide a positive outlet so that our students can be connected to the larger school community. Information regarding these clubs and organizations is shared throughout the year via daily announcements, DCMS Scoop, emails and social media.

SCHOOL-WIDE DISCIPLINE PLAN


In an effort to continue to provide a safe and positive learning environment DCMS follows a school-wide discipline plan. This plan will ensure that all teachers are consistent in their discipline and that discipline measures will not vary from class to class. As such, each student will be held accountable for their behavior in every class. Those students who choose not to behave may receive a mark in class.

Receiving a mark should be taken very seriously and in most instances, they will not be given without a warning. A child may receive a mark in class for unacceptable classroom behavior, disruptions, or anything that distracts from the educational process. Students are to be held accountable for their behavior in every part of the building; this includes the cafeteria and hallways. Faculty and staff will send notification as soon as possible to the student's family. The discipline steps are as follows:

DCMS MARKS CONSEQUENCES

Violation	Consequence
1-2 marks	Warning and parent contact
After 3 marks	1 lunch detention, student conference, parent contact
After 6 marks	3 lunch detentions, parent contact
After 9 marks	1 day ISI, parent contact, BRTI
After 11 marks	2 days ISI, parent contact, BRTI
13 marks	3 days ISI, required parent conference, BRTI

Beyond 13 marks - Administrator discretion, teacher logs everything the same



**Students are expected to follow the
Antler Way Expectations**

At semester the mark system starts over. Therefore, everyone has a new start.

Severe Clause: Severe violations of DCMS/district policies will result in an immediate office referral.

SEARCH POLICY

Per board policy [JFG](#), upon reasonable suspicion, school personnel shall have the authority to detain and search or authorize the search, of any student or property in the possession of the student when the student is on any school premises or while in transit under the authority of the school, or while attending any function sponsored or authorized by the school, for dangerous weapons, controlled dangerous substances, as defined in the Uniform Controlled Dangerous Substances Act, intoxicating beverages, and/or low-point beer.

SEVERE WEATHER/TORNADO

The middle school will be evacuated to the safe room (wrestling room). Once everyone is inside the shelter, no one will be allowed to exit or enter until we are notified that it is safe to do so.

SOCIAL MEDIA (Blogs, Websites, Emails, Instant Messages, Text Messages)

Messages, blogs, and other electronic messaging which imply student intent at school, or slanderous and inappropriate activity during the school day will fall under the school district behavior policy and/or be turned over to the School Resource Officer for

prosecution through the Oklahoma District Attorney. Messages which happen after school hours can be acted upon at the discretion of school administration if school administration feels the school environment is threatened, made unsafe, or if a disruption of the educational process during the school day is taking place based on bullying or slanderous messages.

STOPit

To assist students with reporting incidents of bullying, we utilize the STOPit app. It is the nation's leading Anonymous Reporting System that teaches and empowers individuals to recognize and anonymously report safety, misconduct, and compliance concerns BEFORE they escalate into a crisis or other legal matter. After your anonymous report is submitted, an administrator will see the message and can communicate with the student through the STOPit app.

The access code is DCMS-505.

STUDENT CHECK-OUT

Only a student's parent or their designee listed in Infinite Campus may check a student out of school once he/she has arrived at school.

Parents must come into the school's main lobby to check out a student using our SafeID kiosk. A photo ID will be required at the time of check out. Students will not be allowed to bring a note or show a text message from the parent and wait outside. All student check-outs at the end of the day must occur **by 2:30pm** to not interfere with end-of-the-day dismissal procedures.

STUDENT RECORDS

The Deer Creek Board of Education acknowledges and supports the privacy rights of a student regarding educational records. It is the intent of the Board to comply with the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and amendments. These rights include:

1. The right to inspect and review the student's education records within 45 days of the day the District receives a request for access.
2. The right to request the amendment of the student's education records that the parent or eligible student believes are inaccurate or misleading.
3. The right to consent to disclosures of personally identifiable information contained in the student's education records, except to the extent that FERPA authorizes disclosure without consent. One exception which permits disclosure without consent is disclosure to school officials with legitimate educational interests.
4. The right to file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education concerning alleged failures by the District to comply with the requirements of FERPA.

STUDENT WORK ETHIC


1. Students are expected to do their very best in all academic and extracurricular activities.

2. Students are expected to be on time to all classes and activities.
3. Students are expected to be prepared for all classes and activities.
4. Students are expected to work together in a positive manner for the success of the school or activity.

TARDIES

It is important that all students get to school and class on time. When students are late to school or class, they will receive a tardy. If they have received 4 tardies in one class period per semester, they will receive a principal's detention. Additional tardies will result in additional consequences. The tardy policy goes into effect after the 1st full week of school.

DCMS TARDY CONSEQUENCES	
Violation	Consequence
3 tardies	Warning and parent contact
4 tardies	1 lunch detention assigned and parent contact
7 tardies	2 lunch detentions assigned and parent contact
10 tardies	5 lunch detentions assigned and parent contact
13+	ISI and/or other administrative action and parent phone call from administrator



THE ANTLER WAY
BE SAFE
BE RESPECTFUL
BE RESPONSIBLE

Students are expected to be in class on time according to the DCMS Bell Schedule.

TEXTBOOKS

Textbooks are provided to students without cost. If a student loses or damages a textbook, he/she will be held financially responsible.

TRUANCY

Truancy is defined as being absent from school or an assigned area without the permission of the school or the knowledge of the parents. Any student who leaves a class or school grounds without permission will be considered to be truant and will be disciplined.

1st offense: One day In School Intervention

2nd offense: Two days In School Intervention

3rd offense: Four days In School Intervention

(subsequent truancy incidents will result in additional In-School Intervention or Out-of-School Suspensions)

Important Information for Parents About Meningococcal Disease and Meningococcal Vaccines from the Oklahoma State Department of Education and the Oklahoma State Department of Health

What is meningococcal disease?

Meningococcal (men-IN-jo-kok-ul) disease is a rare but sometimes fatal disease caused by a bacterium called *Neisseria meningitidis*. The disease causes either meningitis, severe swelling of the brain and spinal cord, or meningococemia, a serious infection of the blood.

Who is at risk from meningococcal disease?

Although the risk is extremely low, disease does occur. Babies less than a year old have the highest risk for meningococcal disease, but no vaccine is available to protect them.

Teenagers and young adults, aged 15 to 22 years, are at increased risk because of behaviors that spread the disease. On average two to three people in this age group get meningococcal disease every year in Oklahoma. More than half of these could be prevented by vaccine.

College freshmen living in dormitories have a greater chance of contracting the disease than other persons their age. Others at increased risk are those with immune system problems, without a spleen, and traveling to parts of the world where the disease is more common.

How is the disease spread?

The disease is spread by droplets in the air and direct contact with someone who is infected. That includes coughing or sneezing, kissing, sharing a water bottle or drinking glass, sharing cigarettes, lipstick, lip balm—anything an infected person touches with his or her mouth.

Is meningococcal disease dangerous?

Yes, every year in the United States about 2,500 people are infected and about 300 people a year die, in spite of treatment with antibiotics. Of those who live, about 400 a year lose their arms or legs, become deaf, have problems with their nervous systems, become mentally retarded, or suffer seizures or strokes. This is why preventing the disease is important. If your child has symptoms of meningococcal disease contact your health-care provider immediately.

- Signs and Symptoms of Meningitis**
- Headache
 - Fever
 - Chills
 - Stiff neck
 - Extreme tiredness
 - Vomiting
 - Sensitivity to light
 - Rash of small purplish black-red dots

How can meningococcal disease be prevented?

Vaccines can prevent many types of meningococcal disease, but not all types. There are two vaccines available in the United States that protect against four of the five most common strains of the meningococcal bacteria. The newest vaccine, called Menactra, or MCV4, is currently available for:

- Adolescents entering high school (15 years of age),
- College freshmen who live in dormitories,
- Other people at high risk 11- through 55-years-of-age.

There is a shortage of both vaccines because the company that makes the vaccines has not been able to keep up with the demand; therefore, it may be difficult to get the vaccine. However, healthcare providers are saving the vaccine for these groups.

The earlier vaccine, called Menomune, or MPSV4, was effective in older children and teenagers but booster doses were needed every three to five years. The new vaccine protects against the same types of meningococcal bacteria and probably will not require booster doses. MPSV4 is still used for children 2- through 10-years-old and adults over 55 who are at risk.

Teenagers and young adults can also reduce their risk by taking good care of themselves, by eating a balanced diet, getting enough sleep and exercise, as well as avoiding cigarettes and alcohol.