Dear Parent or Guardian:

This spring, the Harford County Health Department will be offering Free Tdap and Meningococcal (Meningitis) Vaccines to 6th grade students in preparation for the new school immunization requirements starting August, 2014. These vaccine clinics will be held during the school day for parents’ convenience. At the start of the 2014-2015 school year, seventh grade students will be required to have both a Tdap and Meningitis vaccine to begin school.

Seventh grade students who have not received both a Tdap and Meningitis vaccine will be excluded from school. All parents are encouraged to check their child’s immunization records now to determine if their child has received both a Tdap and Meningitis vaccine. Children with health insurance should be taken to their health care provider for these vaccinations as soon as possible. Children without health insurance or with difficulty obtaining these vaccines from their provider, should take advantage of this opportunity.

Tdap Vaccine will now be required to better protect your child from Tetanus, Diphtheria, and Pertussis during the teen years. The rate of pertussis (whooping cough) cases and outbreaks in the U.S. since 2010, is the highest in fifty years. In 2013, 48,000 cases of pertussis were reported nationwide to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Pertussis is also known as the “100 day cough”, since coughing can last 100 or more days. Broken ribs can occur from the force of coughing. Infants can die from pertussis contracted from their teenage siblings. Tdap vaccine is a safe vaccine that has been used for many years.

Each year, approximately 1,400-2,800 cases of meningitis occur in the United States. One in ten of those infected dies from this disease. Of those who survive, one in five will be left with brain damage, loss of limbs, or hearing loss. The Meningitis Vaccine can help prevent your child from becoming infected and dying from meningitis. This is a safe vaccine that can be given to children as young as two years of age.

Please read the enclosed Vaccine Information Statement Sheets for Tdap Vaccine and Meningococcal Vaccine for more information about these vaccines.

If you would like your child to receive the Tdap and Meningitis vaccines through the school based immunization clinic, you must complete, sign, and return the attached consent form to your child’s school no later than April 10, 2014. Please send the consent form in on time so we may properly plan for your school’s vaccination clinic. We will not vaccinate your child unless we receive a completed, signed consent form. Clinics are scheduled to begin Monday, May 5, 2014, and will continue throughout the month of May.

We encourage you to take advantage of this offer to have your child immunized with the Tdap and Meningitis Vaccines. If you have any questions, concerns, or would like more information on Tdap and Meningococcal Vaccines, we suggest the following resources:

1. Contact your family physician/pediatrician
2. Contact the school nurse at your child’s school
3. Contact the Health Department (410-612-1774)

If your 6th grade child is absent on the day Tdap and Meningococcal Vaccines are given at school, please contact the Harford County Health Department to schedule an appointment to receive these vaccinations free of charge.

If your child receives these vaccinations at another healthcare provider, please send documentation in to your school nurse.

Sincerely,

Susan Kelly, EHS
Health Officer
Harford County Health Department

Russell Moy, MD, MPH
Deputy Health Officer
Harford County Health Department