



For Immediate Release:

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HEALTH ADVISORY:

Increase in Meningococcal Disease Cases in LA County

LOS ANGELES – There has been an increase in the number of meningococcal disease cases reported from different parts of Los Angeles County, with seven cases reported since mid-March. Meningococcal disease is a serious, life-threatening bacterial illness that can cause meningitis and blood infections. The Department of Public Health is monitoring the cases and is working with affected contacts to limit the spread of disease.

“The increase in cases of meningococcal disease in a short period of time is higher than expected. Last year, there were a total of 21 such cases,” said Jonathan E. Fielding, MD, MPH, Director of Public Health and Health Officer. “It is important to know that the meningococcal vaccine can prevent two of the three most common types of meningococcal disease in the United States. Also, meningococcal disease can be treated with appropriate antibiotics if caught early.”

Meningococcal disease is spread through close contact with an ill person’s respiratory or throat secretions, including saliva. It is not spread by casual contact or through simply breathing the same air as an ill person. Symptoms include high fever, headache, stiff neck, nausea, vomiting, skin rash, and aversion to bright lights. Suspect cases of meningococcal disease require immediate evaluation by a doctor and treatment with antibiotics.

It is recommended that all 11- and 12-year-olds receive a meningococcal conjugate vaccine, along with a booster dose between 16 and 18 years of age. Currently, less than 50 percent of children in this age group are vaccinated. Certain high-risk children from two to 10 years of age should also receive the vaccine. High-risk children include those who travel to countries where meningococcal meningitis is hyperendemic or epidemic and those with complement component deficiency or functional or anatomic asplenia.

Young adults should get vaccinated if they are planning to live in a college dormitory. Adults requiring immunizations include those who are immuno-compromised, microbiologists who are routinely exposed to meningococcal bacteria, U.S. military recruits, or those traveling to countries where the disease is common. Check with your health care provider for more information on meningococcal vaccination.

The Department of Public Health is committed to protecting and improving the health of the nearly 10 million residents of Los Angeles County. Through a variety of programs, community partnerships and services, Public Health oversees environmental health, disease control, and community and family health. Public Health comprises more than 4,000 employees and has an annual budget exceeding \$750 million. To learn more about Public Health and the work we do, please visit <http://www.publichealth.lacounty.gov>, visit our YouTube channel at <http://www.youtube.com/lapublichealth>, like us on Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/lapublichealth>, or follow us on Twitter: LAPublicHealth.