



Connie Beck, Director
Social Services | Public Health | Mental Health

news release

March 9, 2020

Arcata Student Diagnosed With Bacterial Meningitis

Humboldt County Public Health has been notified of a case of bacterial meningitis in a student attending Arcata High School. The student is currently hospitalized and under treatment. The bacteria, *Neisseria meningitidis*, is one of the few meningitis infections for which preventive antibiotic treatment is recommended for close contacts.

Although the risk of another student becoming ill is extremely low, out of an abundance of caution, Humboldt County Public Health is recommending that close contacts of the student consider antibiotic preventive medicine. Close contacts are those living in the same household or those who had shared oral secretions, as by kissing or sharing foods, drinks, water bottles, cigarettes or other smoking materials, lipstick, etc.

For all other persons, including those who had casual contact as would occur in most school-related activities, the risk of infection is extraordinary low and approaches that in the population at large (one case per 100,000 population/year). For them, antibiotic prophylaxis is NOT indicated and is not advised.

Public Health is reaching out to close contacts and recommending that they contact their healthcare provider for medication. Area healthcare providers have been sent information on this situation.

Although the risk of disease to other students is extremely low, parents are advised to be alert for signs of meningococcal disease. These include, but are not limited to: fever headache, stiff neck, and/or rash that does not blanch on pressure (suggesting bleeding under the skin). If any of these signs or symptoms should develop, the student should be taken immediately to a physician or emergency room to be evaluated for possible meningococcal disease. In most cases, antibiotic treatment of the disease is usually successful, especially if it is started early.

Individuals with questions should call Public Health at 707-445-6201.

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