



Department of Health and Human Services
Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention
286 Water Street
11 State House Station
Augusta, Maine 04333-0011
Tel: (207) 287-8016; Fax (207) 287-9058
TTY Users: Dial 711 (Maine Relay)

Maine Health Alert Network (HAN) System

PUBLIC HEALTH ADVISORY

To: Health Care Providers
From: Dr. Siiri Bennett, State Epidemiologist
Subject: Meningococcal Disease Case at Wiscasset Middle High School
Date / Time: Wednesday, June 12, 2019 at 1:15pm
Pages: 3
Priority: **High**
Message ID: 2019PHADV015

Abstract:

The Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention (Maine CDC) is reporting a case of meningococcal disease in a student who attends Wiscasset Middle High School. Lab tests confirmed the case on June 11, 2019. Maine CDC has informed Wiscasset Middle High School as well as local medical facilities of the case, and is working with them to notify exposed individuals. The student attended two public events during their infectious period: the Wiscasset Middle High School Alumni Banquet on Saturday, June 1st and the Wiscasset Middle High School Graduation on Thursday, June 6th. There are no specific recommendations for students, staff, or visitors to the school, alumni banquet, or graduation.

Most cases of meningococcal disease are sporadic, with fewer than 5% associated with secondary cases. Maine CDC is asking clinicians to be aware of potential exposures and increase surveillance for illness suggestive of meningococcal disease.

Meningococcal Disease Case at Wiscasset Middle High School

Summary

Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention (Maine CDC) is reporting a case of meningococcal disease in a student who attends Wiscasset Middle High School. Lab tests confirmed the case on June 11, 2019. Maine CDC has informed Wiscasset Middle High School as well as local medical facilities of the case, and is working with them to notify exposed individuals. The student attended two public events during their infectious period: the Wiscasset Middle High School Alumni Banquet on Saturday, June 1st and the Wiscasset Middle High School Graduation on Thursday, June 6th. There are no specific recommendations for students, staff, or visitors to the school, alumni banquet, or graduation.

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Background

Meningococcal disease refers to any illness caused by bacteria called *Neisseria meningitidis*. This disease can cause infections of the lining of the brain, spinal cord, or bloodstream. These illnesses can range from mild to severe. The bacteria can spread from one person to another through saliva. Infected people are contagious from seven (7) days before their symptom onset until 24 hours after receiving antibiotics. Meningococcal disease is not spread through the air, on surfaces, or in the stool or urine. It is not as contagious as the common cold or flu. Generally, it takes close contact such as kissing and sharing food or drinks to spread these bacteria. The incubation period ranges from 1 to 10 days but is most often 3-4 days.

Control Measures

Providers can prescribe chemoprophylaxis for close contacts of meningococcal disease cases to help prevent them from getting the disease. Close contacts include people who live with the case, and anyone who has had direct contact with the case's saliva. Classmates, teachers, staff, and graduation attendees are not close contacts and Maine CDC is not recommending antibiotics for these individuals.

Chemoprophylaxis for close contacts of a confirmed case should be initiated as soon as possible and is not indicated more than two weeks after exposure.

There are no specific vaccination recommendations at this time. Maine CDC continues to encourage providers to remind their patients to stay up to date on all recommended vaccinations and offer vaccines when eligible. Maine CDC does not routinely recommend vaccination for sporadic cases of meningococcal disease. If there are secondary cases, Maine CDC may recommend meningococcal vaccine if the outbreak is caused by a serogroup included in a meningococcal vaccine. The serogroup of the bacteria causing illness in the current case is unknown at present.

Key points for providers:

- Consider chemoprophylaxis for close contacts of a meningococcal disease case
- Remind patients to stay up to date on all recommended vaccinations

- Consider meningococcal disease for patients presenting with fever, headache, and stiff neck especially those with a potential exposure at Wiscasset Middle High School
- Meningococcal suspects should be on droplet precaution until 24 hours after antibiotics are administered
- For suspect cases, obtain specimens for testing before administering antibiotics or as soon as possible
 - Blood and CSF for culture
 - Gram stain of CSF and a petechial scraping
 - CSF for antigen testing
 - CSF and blood for PCR testing

Reporting requirements:

All cases of meningococcal disease must be reported immediately by phone to 1-800-821-5821. Timely reporting can facilitate early administration of chemoprophylaxis to close contacts, recognition and prevention of outbreaks, and serogrouping of isolates so that Maine CDC can implement appropriate prevention recommendations rapidly.

For More Information:

- Federal CDC's webpage: <https://www.cdc.gov/meningococcal/index.html>
- HETL's webpage www.mainepublichealth.gov/lab
- Maine Immunization Program webpage: <https://www1.maine.gov/dhhs/mecdc/infectious-disease/immunization/>
- Please follow your facility's procedures for environmental cleaning