Provider Alert: Meningococcal Disease Outbreak in UCSB Students

This alert is to notify providers of an outbreak of Meningococcal Disease among students at UC Santa Barbara. There are currently 3 confirmed cases of Meningococcal Disease, including meningococcemia and meningitis, in 3 undergraduate students. The bacteria *Neisseria meningitidis* has been cultured from all three patients, and is susceptible to first-line antibiotics. The dates of illness onset for the 3 cases were November 11, 13, and 18.

Laboratory testing has determined that 2 of the 3 cases are serogroup B, which is not covered by the meningococcal vaccine. Serogroup testing on the third case is pending. This means that previously vaccinated students are not protected against this particular strain. There is currently no FDA-approved vaccine against serogroup B.

The Santa Barbara County Public Health Department has been working closely with UCSB to conduct a thorough contact investigation. We have been identifying close contacts to the index cases, and providing antibiotic prophylaxis to those who meet the definition of “close contact”, (defined as individuals who may have come into contact with the saliva or respiratory secretions of the ill patients through kissing, sharing eating utensils, drinking cups, cigarettes, or extended face-to-face interactions within 7 days of the onset of illness). The antibiotic being used for prophylaxis is Ciprofloxacin 500 mg orally in one single dose. This antibiotic decreases the chance that the exposed person will develop Meningococcal Disease. We are not recommending antibiotic prophylaxis for community members or UCSB students in general. We are only recommending prophylaxis for individuals specifically identified as a close contact to an index case.

The Santa Barbara County Public Health Department is requesting that community providers be on alert for college-age patients presenting with symptoms of Meningococcal Disease. These symptoms include fever, myalgias, headache, new rash, vomiting, and photophobia. It is important to note that Meningococcal Disease has a 10-30% mortality rate; early treatment is essential to a good outcome. The PHD is recommending that college-aged patients with the above symptoms be sent to the Emergency Room for blood cultures and evaluation. In addition, all suspected cases should be reported to Disease Control at (805) 681-5280.

We will continue to work with UCSB, the California Department of Public Health, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to respond to this outbreak in a proactive, timely manner. New information and recommendations will be provided as they become available.