



News Release

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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CONTACT: [Ali Bay](#)
(916) 440-7259

CDPH Issues Health Advisory for Meningococcal Disease

Outbreak Identified in Southern California, Vaccines Urged
for At-Risk Adult Gay and Bisexual Men, and all People with HIV

SACRAMENTO – California Department of Public Health (CDPH) Director and State Public Health Officer Dr. Karen Smith today issued a health advisory related to an outbreak of invasive meningococcal disease occurring in Southern California, primarily among adult gay and bisexual men. Meningococcal disease is caused by the bacteria *Neisseria meningitidis* and can cause meningitis and bloodstream infections (sepsis). Although rare, meningococcal disease is serious and potentially fatal.

Since the beginning of May, nine meningococcal disease cases have been identified in men living in Los Angeles and Orange Counties, most of whom were gay or bisexual men. One patient has died as a result of the infection. Six of the cases are known to be caused by a particular strain (serogroup C) of meningococcal bacteria and one other case is awaiting serogroup confirmation.

“We are concerned that gay and bisexual men in Southern California may be at increased risk for meningococcal disease,” said Dr. Smith. “We encourage men who partner with other men to be aware of the risk of meningococcal disease and consider getting vaccinated.”

Several outbreaks and clusters of serogroup C meningococcal disease among gay and bisexual men have been reported in New York City, Los Angeles County, and Chicago since 2014. Similar outbreaks have also been reported recently in Europe. Many of the men affected by these outbreaks were infected with HIV.

HIV-infected people are at increased risk of contracting meningococcal disease. Because of this increased risk, the U.S. Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices recommend this week that all HIV-infected persons aged 2 months and older be routinely vaccinated with the meningococcal vaccine that protects against serogroups A, C, W and Y disease (MenACWY).

Meningococcal bacteria are transmitted through close personal contact and can be spread from person to person by small droplets of respiratory secretions from the nose and throat. Gay and bisexual men may be at increased risk of meningococcal disease if they have close or intimate contact with multiple partners, regularly visit crowded venues such as bars and parties, or smoke cigarettes, marijuana or illegal drugs. State health officials urge all HIV-infected persons and gay and bisexual men who may be at increased risk for meningococcal disease to consider receiving MenACWY.

All HIV-infected adults should receive two doses of MenACWY. Gay and bisexual men who are at increased risk for meningococcal disease and are not HIV-infected should receive one dose of MenACWY vaccine. Those who have not been tested for HIV within the last year should be offered an HIV test along with vaccination. Adults may locate meningococcal vaccines in their area by using CDC's [Adult Vaccine Finder](#).

Symptoms of meningococcal disease may include fever, vomiting, severe headache, stiff neck, confusion, rash and generalized muscle pains. The time from exposure to the start of symptoms is typically just a few days. People who experience these symptoms should seek medical care immediately.

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