



# Public Health

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### Press Release

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**DATE: February 2, 2011**

**HEADLINE: Suspected Bacterial Meningitis in U of I Student**

**LEWISTON, IDAHO –**

Public Health – Idaho North Central District is collaborating with officials from the University of Idaho to identify close contacts of a student who is suspected of having bacterial meningitis. These close contacts may benefit from preventative antibiotic treatment.

Early treatment with antibiotics may effectively prevent the disease. The risk to the general public of contracting this infection is very low. Contacts will be considered for preventative antibiotic treatment if they had close contact with the student between January 19, 2011 and February 01, 2011.

Those considered close contacts include household members, people socially close enough to have shared saliva (eating utensils, cigarettes, food and beverage containers) and /or anyone directly exposed to nasopharyngeal secretions from the student. Public Health and the University of Idaho are working together to notify those considered at risk.

Transmission occurs by droplets or direct contact with infected nasal or throat secretions. Symptoms associated with bacterial meningitis infections may include: fever, severe headache, chills, stiff neck, confusion, nausea, vomiting, joint or muscle pain and sometimes a red or purple rash. Persons experiencing these symptoms should seek immediate medical attention. The time from exposure to signs and symptoms of this bacterial illness are usually 3-4 days with a range of 2-10 days.

There are vaccines to prevent *N. meningitidis* available in the U.S. Vaccination is recommended for all children 11-18 years old, ideally at their routine preadolescent visit (11 to 12 years of age). Other people at increased risk for whom routine vaccination is recommended include college freshmen living in dormitories.

Good hand hygiene is important to control the spread of the disease. Children and adults should cover both mouth and nose when sneezing or coughing and wash hands thoroughly and dispose of used tissues. Sharing of common items such as eating utensils and drinking cups should be avoided.

For additional information contact Mike Larson, RN, BSN, Staff Epidemiologist at Public Health – Idaho North Central District, 208-799-3100.