



## **P R E S S R E L E A S E**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **Public Health and UCSB Join to Respond to Two Cases of Meningococcal Disease**

Two students who attend the University of California Santa Barbara (UCSB) have been diagnosed with meningococcal disease, a bacterial infection that causes bloodstream infections and meningitis. The two ill UCSB students are receiving medical care and treatment.

The University and local Public Health officials are investigating the cases, providing preventive antibiotics to contacts where indicated, and educating the University community about meningococcal disease, including meningitis (infection of the lining of the brain) and meningococemia (infection in the blood.)

**Close contacts** of meningococcal disease cases are recommended to receive preventive antibiotics. Close contacts include persons who were exposed to the ill person's respiratory and throat secretions through living in close quarters, kissing, or other prolonged close contact. The Public Health Department is identifying persons who had close contact with the ill students and recommending antibiotics to protect them from also becoming ill. Case investigation has not identified any connection with students at Princeton University.

**Meningococcal disease signs and symptoms**, which are sometimes mistaken for those of flu early in the course of illness, can include:

- High fever
- Severe headache
- Rash
- Body aches/joint pain
- Nausea/vomiting
- Increased sensitivity to light
- Confusion

**Anyone with the signs or symptoms of meningococcal disease should seek medical care immediately.** Early treatment of meningococcal disease is critical as the infection can quickly become life-threatening. UCSB students and staff are urged to pay particular attention to this advice in light of the recent cases.

College-aged persons, especially first-year students living in residence halls, are at increased risk of meningococcal disease. Although the first recent case was caused by a strain of the bacteria that is not prevented by either of the available meningococcal vaccines, it is important for students to be up to date with meningococcal vaccination. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends two doses of meningococcal conjugate vaccine (Menactra® or Menveo®) for all adolescents at ages 11-12 and 16 years. First-year students living in residence halls are

recommended to receive at least one dose of vaccine prior to college entry. If only one dose of vaccine was given before age 16 years, an additional dose should be given before college enrollment. More information can be found at [www.cdc.gov/meningococcal/](http://www.cdc.gov/meningococcal/)

Covering coughs, keeping hands clean, and being up to date with recommended vaccines, especially flu vaccine this time of year, are actions everyone can take to stay healthy, protect themselves from illness, and prevent the spread of infections to others. Persons with questions or concerns about meningococcal disease are urged to contact UCSB Student Health or their primary healthcare care provider.

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