



P R E S S R E L E A S E

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

4th Confirmed Case of Meningococcal Disease In Santa Barbara County

The Santa Barbara County Public Health Department (PHD) and the University of California, Santa Barbara (UCSB) have confirmed a 4th case of meningococcal disease in a UCSB undergraduate student. All four students with meningococcal disease became ill within a three week time period of November 2013. One case has resulted in permanent disability.

A number of steps have been taken to minimize the spread of the disease including:

- Providing preventive antibiotics to more than 500 students who were identified as close contacts of the initial three ill students and close contacts of the fourth case have also identified and have received antibiotics.
- Providing information on meningococcal disease and strategies for prevention to all students, staff and faculty at UCSB.
- Ongoing consultation with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).
- Providing information about the outbreak to healthcare providers across the state to raise awareness.

No currently available disease prevention and control strategies can ensure that no additional cases will occur as part of this outbreak. However, the PHD and UCSB are working jointly with the California Department of Public Health to implement a number of actions that have the potential to reduce the risk of future cases. Any possible impact of these actions to prevent additional cases is unknown.

In the setting of an ongoing outbreak of a serious disease, we believe that these actions are reasonable. While these actions may not prevent additional cases, we hope they may reduce the number of persons exposed to the outbreak strain of *Neisseria meningitidis* bacteria.

Therefore, this week we will be:

- Providing antibiotics to additional individuals who we believe may have already been exposed to the bacteria based on a scientific assessment of the social networks of existing cases. These students will be directed to obtain antibiotics at UCSB no later than Tuesday and will be directed to take the medication onsite.
- Informing all students, staff and faculty at UCSB about the importance of seeking medical care if they are ill (especially if they have signs and symptoms of meningococcal disease such as fever and headache) as timely treatment is very important to recovery. Even students who have been given preventive antibiotics can become ill depending on the timing of exposure; preventive antibiotics only offer protection for about one day, so students can become ill if exposed to the bacteria again in the future.

- Informing all students, staff and faculty at UCSB of the importance of maintaining healthy personal habits during the normal stressful exam period (e.g. good sleep, nutrition and hygiene behaviors) and staying home when ill to minimize exposure to others.
- Suspending specific social events on campus, i.e., parties sponsored by Greek organizations, in an effort to interrupt transmission of the outbreak strain in social networks.

These actions are initiated with the goal of protecting health and preventing additional cases of meningococcal disease. They are important and compliance is greatly appreciated!

If there are any new developments with the meningococcal disease outbreak in our community, these will be communicated in a timely manner.

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