

February 16, 2009

Dear Parent,

The Galveston County Health District received a report about a La Marque Middle School student who passed away this weekend. Although lab reports do not identify the organism, the clinical picture is consistent with bacterial meningitis.

Bacterial meningitis is a serious infection that affects the lining of the brain and spinal cord. Many kinds of bacteria may cause the infection; the most common types include *Streptococcus pneumoniae*, *Neisseria meningitidis* and *Haemophilus influenzae*.

**Based on the determination of probable bacterial meningitis the Health District is recommending the following:**

**(1)** If your child has any signs or symptoms, see your healthcare provider as soon as possible. Symptoms may appear within 2-10 days of exposure. The symptoms of bacterial meningitis include sudden onset of fever, intense headache, stiff neck, nausea, vomiting, sensitivity to light and possible rash.

**(2)** If your child has had intimate/close contact with the deceased student, the Health District recommends your child receive preventive antibiotics within 14 days of your child's exposure. A person may become exposed to the bacteria that cause meningitis by direct contact to nose or throat fluids of an infected person. This can occur by coughing, kissing, sharing utensils or drinking after an infected person. Therefore, an individual being in the same classroom or area with an infected person is **not** considered direct exposure. For additional information refer to <http://www.cdc.gov/meningitis/index.htm>.

**(3)** Read more about bacterial meningitis and make sure your child's vaccinations are up-to-date. Consult your healthcare provider about vaccines which protect against certain causes of bacterial meningitis.

If you believe your child has been directly exposed to the secretions of an infected person, you may call the Galveston County Health District Chief Epidemiologist, Dana Beckham, DVM at (409) 938-2322.

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