



HEALTH ADVISORY Public Health

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County urges meningococcal vaccine during ongoing outbreak

The County’s Health Officer Dr. Maxwell Ohikhuare is urging people to get the meningococcal vaccine who are at higher risk of contracting the disease. Those in high risk include men who have sex with men, gay, bisexual men, as well as HIV-infected persons.

As of August 15, 22 cases of meningococcal disease have been confirmed in an ongoing Southern California outbreak. There are currently no reported cases in San Bernardino County.

In response to this ongoing outbreak, the California Department of Public Health Immunization Branch (CDPH) has granted temporary approval to all Local Health Departments to use state funded vaccines for outbreak control efforts. It is particularly important that high risk individuals be vaccinated. This vaccine protects against the dominant strain of disease identified in this outbreak. Meningococcal vaccine is available at no cost to all County residents who desire to be vaccinated regardless of their insurance status or risk factors.

Currently, the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices recommends the MenACWY meningococcal vaccine to all high risk individuals. HIV-infected persons should receive two doses of the vaccine, and uninfected men should receive one dose. Those who were vaccinated more than five years ago should be revaccinated.

Meningococcal disease is a severe bacterial infection that can cause meningitis, bloodstream infections (sepsis), pneumonia, and arthritis. Meningococcal bacteria are transmitted from person to person by respiratory droplets from the nose and throat. Individuals who are in close personal contact with multiple people, regularly visit crowded venues, or use illegal drugs, smoke cigarettes, marijuana, or hookahs may be at higher risk of infection. Symptoms of meningococcal disease may include fever, vomiting, severe headache, stiff neck, confusion, and rash. If experiencing any of these symptoms, it is important to seek medical care immediately. Symptoms of meningococcal disease often begin soon after exposure and can be fatal.

There have been no cases reported in San Bernardino County to date. So far, all cases have been reported in Los Angeles and Orange Counties, and most cases have been gay or bisexual men. To date, two patients have died from meningococcal disease associated with this outbreak.

County residents who are at risk can make a vaccination appointment at County Public Health clinics by calling (800) 722-4777. This vaccine may also be obtained through a private provider.

For more information about meningococcal disease and vaccine recommendations, visit the [CDPH](http://www.cdph.ca) website or call the Communicable Disease Section (CDS) at 1-800-722-4794.

