



**COUNTY OF SAN LUIS OBISPO HEALTH AGENCY
PUBLIC HEALTH DEPARTMENT**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Public Health Department Investigating Bacterial Meningitis Case Following Student Death

San Luis Obispo, CA—A student living in San Luis Obispo and attending Cuesta College has died from presumed bacterial meningitis. Laboratory testing to confirm this diagnosis is underway. Due to the serious nature of the illness, the Public Health Department is working with local hospitals, Cuesta College and people close to the student to identify any individuals who may have potential risk of infection. Those individuals are receiving preventive antibiotics.

“This loss is devastating for everyone involved,” said Dr. Penny Borenstein, Health Officer of the County of San Luis Obispo. “Our hearts go out to the family, friends, and everyone who cared about this young person.”

Bacterial meningitis is an infection of the lining of the brain and spinal cord. It can be treated with antibiotics.

Preventive antibiotics are recommended for people who have had close contact with a meningococcus case. This include people who were exposed to the ill person’s respiratory and throat secretions through kissing, sharing eating utensils or drinking glasses, or other prolonged very close contact. The bacteria are not readily transmitted through casual contact or by breathing air where someone with meningococcal disease has been. (For comparison, these bacteria are not as contagious as the viruses that cause the common cold or the flu.)

Signs and symptoms of bacterial meningitis usually include sudden onset of fever, headache, and stiff neck. It can start with symptoms similar to flu, and will often also cause nausea, vomiting, rash, confusion and increased sensitivity to light.

Anyone with signs or symptoms of bacterial meningitis should seek medical care immediately. Early treatment is critical as the infection can quickly become life-threatening.

People who should be especially alert for signs and symptoms are being notified by the Public Health Department and Cuesta College. The Public Health Department is also directly contacting individuals who may be at risk and is providing preventive antibiotics to those individuals.

Two types of vaccines are available to protect against bacterial meningitis, and many high school and college students receive at least one of these vaccines. These vaccines are available from the Public Health Department, many pharmacies, and regular health care providers.

For more information about bacterial meningitis, visit www.cdc.gov/meningococcal.

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