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New York City Meningococcal Outbreak FAQ's

San Francisco health officials are asking local health professionals and the public to take note of recent recommendations by New York City (NYC) health authorities. In San Francisco, there has been no recent outbreak of meningococcal disease. However, San Francisco Department of Public Health (SFDPH) officials are taking action in order to inform and protect San Francisco gay and bisexual men who could become infected with meningococcal disease, specifically during travel to NYC.

What is invasive meningococcal disease?

Invasive meningococcal disease (IMD) is a serious infection that can cause a high fever, headache, stiff neck, and rash. If you develop these symptoms, you should immediately seek medical care, by calling 911 or going to the nearest emergency room. Even if diagnosed early and treated with antibiotics, it can still sometimes result in death, permanent brain damage, hearing loss, or kidney failure.

What is San Francisco Department of Public Health recommending?

Gay and bisexual men planning travel to NYC who anticipate having close or intimate contact with gay and bisexual men in New York City, and gay and bisexual men who have recently traveled to New York City and had close or intimate contact with gay and bisexual men there, should be aware of the New York City meningococcal disease outbreak and ought to discuss vaccination with their doctor. Intimate contact includes sexual contact, kissing, sharing drinks, cigarettes and eating utensils, or anytime you come in contact with an infected persons' saliva.

Why did New York City report an outbreak of meningococcal disease?

Over the past year, 12 cases of meningococcal disease were identified among gay and bisexual men in NYC, including three new cases in the past six weeks, prompting health officials in New York City to recommend meningococcal vaccine for gay and bisexual men who have had, or will have, intimate contact with men who are meeting sex partners through websites, digital applications "apps", or at a bar or party. Intimate contact includes sexual contact, kissing, sharing drinks, cigarettes and eating utensils, or anytime you come in contact with an infected persons' saliva.

More detail about the New York City outbreak: On November 29, 2012, after noting an increase in cases of meningococcal disease among gay and bisexual men in NYC, the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (NYC-DOHMH) expanded its recommendations to vaccinate some high risk gay and bisexual men living in NYC against meningococcal meningitis, see below. The NYC-DOHMH continues to identify new cases of meningococcal disease among gay and bisexual men. Since August 2010, there have

been 17 reported cases of IMD in gay and bisexual men in New York City; 1 in 2010, 4 in 2011 and 12 in 2012. The incidence rate of IMD among gay and bisexual men age 18-64 to date in 2012 is 11.7 per 100,000, compared to a background rate of around 0.3/100,000 among all New York City residents. Of the 17 cases since August 2010, four have died and ten are HIV-infected. At least seven reported recent drug use and meeting sexual partners online or with a digital application. There was one additional case from a patient who works but does not live in NYC.

Is San Francisco also seeing an outbreak or cluster of meningococcal disease?

At this time in San Francisco, there has been no recent outbreak of meningococcal disease.

Does having HIV put me at greater risk of invasive meningococcal disease?

People living with HIV may be at greater risk than the general population of acquiring the infection that causes invasive meningococcal disease. Overall 10-14% of all people, regardless of HIV status who develop the disease die of it.

How is meningococcal disease spread?

The disease is spread by close contact with an infected person. Examples of close contact include kissing and having sex. In addition, sharing eating utensils, water bottles, drinks, or cigarettes with an infected person may spread the disease. It is NOT spread by simply breathing the air where a person with the disease has been.

How can I protect myself?

There are several vaccines licensed for use in adults that can help protect people against invasive meningococcal disease. Meningococcal vaccine may provide protection 7 to 10 days after vaccination, but not everyone will develop protective levels of antibodies. If you are HIV-infected or in other certain circumstances and you do receive the meningococcal conjugate vaccine, you should return to your health care provider eight weeks later for a second dose.

Should I get vaccinated with the meningococcal vaccine?

If you are a gay or bisexual man traveling to NYC and you think you will have, or you recently had, close or intimate contact with gay or bisexual men while there, you should discuss meningococcal vaccination with your doctor. Intimate contact includes sexual contact, kissing, sharing eating utensils, drinks or cigarettes, or anytime you come in contact with an infected persons' saliva.

Is this a live vaccine?

The vaccines do not contain any live bacteria.

What are the risks and side effects of the vaccine?

Up to about half of people who get meningococcal vaccines have minimal side effects, such as redness or pain where the shot was given. These symptoms usually last for one or two days. A small percentage of people who receive the vaccine develop a fever. Severe reactions, such as a serious allergic reaction, are very rare.

How long does vaccine protection last?

There is currently not enough data to know exactly how long protection will last in HIV-infected persons. Additional data is needed to determine whether a booster dose is necessary five years after the initial 2-dose series.

If I was vaccinated in college, do I need to get the vaccine now?

Some people who were vaccinated in the past may need to receive a second (“booster”) dose. Please discuss your vaccination history with your doctor to decide if you need an additional dose of vaccine.

Where can I find vaccine?

First, check with your health care provider, who may have the vaccine on hand.

Doctors and clinics can order meningococcal vaccine from the following manufacturers:

- Novartis, go to <https://novartisvaccinesdirect.com/index>.
- Sanofi Pasteur, call 1-800-822-2463 or go to www.vaccineshoppe.com.

If you don't have a regular medical provider, you can go to the Adult Immunization and Travel Clinic (AIRC) at the SFDPH. For prices, directions and hours go to their website at www.sfcddp.org/airc.html or go to the Vaccines for Adults –Immunity website at www.vaccinesforadults.org/map/index.html to find another location.

Is this in any way related to the other meningitis outbreak that has been traced back to steroid injections?

The outbreak of invasive meningococcal disease among gay and bisexual men in New York City is completely unrelated to the outbreak of meningitis in several states that is caused by a contaminated medication. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) are currently coordinating a multistate investigation of fungal meningitis among patients who received an epidural injection with a potentially contaminated steroid medication. Please visit the CDC's website for more information on this: <http://www.cdc.gov/HAI/outbreaks/meningitis.html>

For more information on meningococcal disease or the outbreak in NYC, please visit these websites:

- San Francisco Department of Public Health:
<http://www.sfcddp.org/healthalerts.html>
<http://sfcddp.org/meningococcal.html>
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:
<http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm6003a3.htm>
<http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/rr5407a1.htm>
<http://www.cdc.gov/meningococcal/index.html>
Meningococcal Vaccine Information Statement (VIS):
<http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/pubs/vis/downloads/vis-mening.pdf>
- NYC Department of Health:
<http://www.nyc.gov/html/doh/html/pr2012/pr036-12.shtml>
<https://a816-health29ssl.nyc.gov/sites/NYCHAN/WebPages/home.aspx>
Provider -FAQ's - meningococcal vaccine: <http://www.nyc.gov/html/doh/downloads/pdf/cd/mening-provider-faq.pdf>
Patient Fact Sheet: <http://www.nyc.gov/html/doh/downloads/pdf/cd/2012/meningitis-patient-factsheet.pdf>