

Important Health Update for Gay Men in Southern Wisconsin

Invasive Meningococcal Disease (IMD)

June 2016—The Chicago Department of Health has identified two additional cases of Invasive Meningococcal Disease (IMD) in men who sleep with men (MSM). Since May 2015, nine men have contracted IMD, including one death.

Local health authorities are urging IMD vaccination for MSM who plan to travel to or have sex partners from *the Chicago area*. Men are urged to see their health care provider immediately if they have any symptoms of IMD. This is especially important for gay, Bi or MSM living with HIV.

What is IMD?

IMD is an illness caused by the bacteria *Neisseria meningitidis*. It includes bloodstream infections and *meningitis*, which occurs when bacteria enter the protective membranes covering the brain and spinal cord.

What are the signs and symptoms of meningococcal disease?

The range for symptom onset and illness is two to 10 days, but most commonly occurs between three and five days after contact with an infected person. Symptoms can include:

- Sudden onset of headache and/or high fever
- Stiff neck
- Rash
- Nausea, vomiting
- Sensitivity to light, confusion or combativeness

IMD can be fatal, but when diagnosed early it can usually be treated effectively with antibiotics. It is important to watch for symptoms and **seek medical care as soon as possible**.

How is IMD spread?

The bacteria that cause IMD are spread through direct contact with saliva (spit) and other fluids from the mouth or throat. Direct contact includes kissing, sharing eating or drinking utensils (including water bottles), sharing cigarettes or smoking materials, or other direct contact with saliva or respiratory secretions. Sexual partners, roommates, or anyone in direct contact with an infected individual's saliva should be considered at increased risk.

How can I better protect myself?

- Get vaccinated against meningococcal disease.
- Avoid sharing drinks, cigarettes, smoking equipment, or similar items.
- Avoid contact with spit or other fluids from the nose or mouth of other persons.
- **Condoms do not provide protection against IMD.**

Is there a vaccine and where can I get vaccinated?

A safe and effective vaccine to prevent IMD is available at many doctor's offices and clinics.

If I was previously vaccinated, do I need to be re-vaccinated now?

Protection from a single dose has shown to decrease within five years. A "booster" dose is recommended five years after you received your first vaccination.

What else can I do?

Both HIV-positive and HIV-negative MSM should receive an annual STD screening panel to include syphilis, chlamydia, and gonorrhea. If you don't know your HIV status, get tested. Free HIV tests are available at:

- **ARCW, Madison Office:** 600 Williamson Street, call 608-252-6540 for appointment
- **Public Health of Madison and Dane County:** Walk-in HIV Testing clinics, call 608-243 -0411
- **UW Sexual Health Clinic** for students and faculty of University of Wisconsin: call 608-265-5600

