

Worldcue® Alert

Severity: Informational Alert

Health: Multiple cases of invasive meningococcal disease reported in Los Angeles County, Calif., US. Confirm vaccination status; observe basic health precautions.

The locations affected by this alert are:

- California - Los Angeles
- California - Burbank
- California - Long Beach

This alert began 05 Jul 2016 18:51 GMT and is scheduled to expire 31 Jul 2016 23:59 GMT.

- **Disease:** Meningococcal disease
- **Affected Areas:** Los Angeles County
- **Cases:** 11
- **Period:** January-July 2016
- **Transmission:** Respiratory (coughing, sneezing) and throat secretions, including saliva

Summary

As of July 1, at least seven cases of invasive meningococcal disease have been reported in Los Angeles County, California, since May, bringing the 2016 total to 11 cases ([map](#)). According to health officials, the majority of the cases have occurred among adult men, with at least four of the cases specifically among men who have sex with men (MSM, as designated by the WHO). Investigations into these cases are ongoing.

Background and Analysis

In 2015, a total of 12 invasive meningococcal disease cases were reported in Los Angeles County, including only one case among MSM. Due to the recent increase in cases among MSM, health officials in Los Angeles County are recommending that all MSM patients at an elevated risk of meningococcal disease, regardless of HIV status, be vaccinated against the disease.

Meningococcal disease is a potentially fatal bacterial infection spread by exposure to respiratory aerosols released when an infected person speaks, coughs, or sneezes. *N. meningitidis* transmission typically requires close or lengthy contact with an infected individual. Symptoms of meningococcal meningitis begin with sudden fever, headache, and stiff neck, often followed by nausea, vomiting, sensitivity to light, and altered mental state. An alternative form of infection, meningococcal septicemia, causes symptoms including fatigue, vomiting and diarrhea, chills, severe muscle and joint pain, rapid breathing, and rash. Suspected meningococcal infections require prompt medical attention, as antibiotic treatment must be started early to be effective. Most strains of meningococcal disease can be prevented by vaccination.

Advice

Visit a doctor to discuss vaccination against meningococcal disease. Emphasize basic health precautions: Avoid close contact with individuals who appear ill, and wash hands regularly with soap and water. If soap and water are not available, use alcohol-based hand sanitizer.

Related Advice: [Information on Meningococcal Disease.](#)

Related Advice: [Basic Health Precautions to Avoid Infection](#)

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