

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

July 7, 2016

LA County Partners with Community Providers to Encourage At-Risk Gay/Bisexual Men to Get Meningococcal Vaccine

LOS ANGELES – The Los Angeles County Departments of Public Health (Public Health) and Health Services are partnering with community providers caring for gay/bisexual men, or men who have sex with men (MSM), and HIV infected populations to increase vaccinations for Invasive Meningococcal Disease.

“Public Health continues to work every day to protect health and stop the spread of this fatal disease,” said Dr. Jeffrey Gunzenhauser, Interim Health Officer, Los Angeles County Department of Public Health. “Vaccination is the best way to prevent the disease. The County is committed to developing a comprehensive vaccination campaign to protect all persons who are at risk.”

During the months of May and June, a disproportionate number of cases have occurred among self-identified MSM within LA County. To protect public health and prevent the future spread of Invasive Meningococcal Disease, it is important to encourage vaccination and take other preventive measures that limit activities that spread saliva.

“The County is closely monitoring and taking every step to prevent the spread of Meningococcal Disease,” said LA County Health Agency Director Mitchell Katz, MD. “It is important to get educated and vaccinated, especially men who have sex with men and persons who are HIV infected. A number of public and private clinics and pharmacies, including health centers run by the L.A. County Departments of Public Health and Health Services, are offering vaccine for free or low-cost.”

Since the beginning of the year, eight of the 17 people infected with Invasive Meningococcal Disease in the County of Los Angeles (including Long Beach) are self-identified gay or bisexual men.

“The recent outbreak of invasive meningococcal disease in Los Angeles reminds us that, even though the number of cases is still small, gay and bisexual men continue to be infected at a higher rate than the general population,” said Los Angeles LGBT Center Medical Director Robert Bolan. “HIV infected individuals also appear to be at higher risk. To clear up any ambiguity, we think the message should be simple. If you are a gay or bisexual man or a transgender individual, you should receive the meningococcal vaccination. HIV uninfected individuals only need a single dose of the vaccine.”

The meningococcal vaccination is recommended for a number of groups who are at increased risk for the disease, including:

- All HIV-infected people.
- All gay/MSM, regardless of HIV status, who regularly have close or intimate contact with multiple partners or who seek partners through digital apps, particularly those who share cigarettes/marijuana or use illegal drugs.

Free meningococcal vaccinations are available for all people at higher-risk at the following health centers:

<p>Los Angeles LGBT Center 1625 N. Schrader Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90028 By appointment only. To schedule an appointment, call 323-993-7500.</p> <p>APLA Health & Wellness Gleicher/Chen Health Center 3743 S. La Brea Ave., Los Angeles, CA 90016 Call 323-329-9900 for information.</p> <p>APLA Health & Wellness Long Beach Health Center 1043 Elm Ave., Suite 302, Long Beach, CA 90813 Call 562-432-0700 for information.</p> <p>AHF Wellness Center - Hollywood 1300 N. Vermont Ave., Suite 407, Los Angeles, CA 90027 Call 866-339-2525 for information. Clinic is located in the Doctor's Tower building.</p> <p>AHF Wellness Center - West Adams 2146 W. Adams Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90018 Call 888-836-5946 for information.</p> <p>AHF Wellness Center - San Fernando Valley 4835 Van Nuys Blvd., Suite 200, Sherman Oaks, CA 91403 Call 866-625-4559 for information.</p>	<p>AHF Wellness Centers - Long Beach 3500 E. Pacific Coast Hwy., Long Beach, CA 90804 Call (562) 494-4983 for information.</p> <p>Curtis-Tucker Public Health Center 123 W. Manchester Blvd., Inglewood, CA 90301 Regular hour are Monday – Friday, 8 am – 4 pm. Call (310) 419-5325 with questions.</p> <p>Martin Luther King Jr. Center for Public Health (in STD Clinic) 11833 S. Wilmington Ave., Los Angeles, CA 90059 Regular hour are Monday – Friday, 8 am – 4 pm. Call (323) 568-8100 with questions.</p> <p>Whittier Health Center 7643 S. Painter Ave., Whittier, CA 90602 Regular hour are Monday – Friday, 8 am – 4 pm. Call (562) 464-5350 with questions.</p> <p>Pomona Public Health Center 750 S. Park Ave., Pomona CA 91766 Regular hour are Monday – Friday, 8 am – 4 pm. Call (909) 868-0235 with questions.</p> <p>North Hollywood Health Center (in STD Clinic) 5300 Tujunga Ave., North Hollywood, CA 91601 Regular hour are Monday – Friday, 8 am – 4 pm. Call (818) 766-3982 with questions.</p>
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Vaccinations can also be obtained from other healthcare providers and in select pharmacies. Call your provider or your pharmacy to for more information. Limiting activities that spread saliva can also decrease the risk of infection. These include:

- Don't share drinks, utensils, food, or toothbrushes.
- Don't have multiple kissing partners.

- Don't share things you smoke, like cigarettes, e-cigarettes, cigars, pipes and hookahs.

Public Health continues working closely with the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) and neighboring health departments as well as the CDC to promote education and awareness, and to increase the ease and availability of vaccination.

About Invasive Meningococcal Disease:

Meningococcal disease is a rare, but serious disease that can lead to swelling in the brain and spinal cord, loss of a limb, deafness, brain damage or even death. Meningococcal disease is caused by a type of bacteria known as *Neisseria meningitidis*. The illness most people are familiar with is meningitis. It can be spread to others through the respiratory secretions of people who carry the bacteria without symptoms in their nose and throat. Meningococcal disease can start with flu-like symptoms, and progress to high fever, headache, stiff neck, confusion and rash. People who experience these symptoms should seek medical care immediately.

Helpful Links:

- [LA County Public Health website](#)
- [Public Health – Stop Before Your Swap](#)
- [Public Health Vaccination Clinics](#)
- [Gay/MSM: What you should know.](#)
- [FAQ: What is Meningococcal disease?](#)

The Department of Public Health is committed to protecting and improving the health of the nearly 10 million residents of Los Angeles County. Through a variety of programs, community partnerships and services, Public Health oversees environmental health, disease control, and community and family health. Public Health comprises nearly 4,000 employees and has an annual budget exceeding \$900 million. To learn more about the LA County Department of Public Health and the work they do, visit PublicHealth.LACounty.gov, and follow Public Health on social media at twitter.com/LAPublicHealth, facebook.com/LAPublicHealth, and youtube.com/LAPublicHealth.

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Los Angeles County Department of Public Health works to protect health, prevent disease, and promote health and well-being.