

Three universities have reported meningococcal meningitis cases including University of California -Santa Barbara. *Meningococcal meningitis* is caused by a bacterium called *Neisseria meningitides* that can infect the lining of the brain and spinal cord. There are a few different types or strains of *Neisseria meningitides*. In the US, types B, C and Y cause the majority of disease.

The University community should be aware of these important points about meningitis:

- **Any student with a high fever should go to Student Health** or call (310) 506-4316 during business hours. For afterhours care, call PEP-RN nursing advice line (800) 413-0848, or go to the urgent care or emergency room.
- **You may become ill with meningitis even if you have not been in contact with someone who is sick.** The bacterium that causes meningitis occurs naturally and can survive in the nose and throat in a small number of people without causing symptoms to the carrier, while still being contagious to others. Most cases of meningitis are acquired through exposure to these asymptomatic carriers.
- **You can help prevent the spread of disease by increasing hygienic practices like not sharing drinking glasses, eating utensils or smoking materials, and being vaccinated.**
- **If you opted out of the required meningococcal vaccine (Menactra) you could be at higher risk of infection. This vaccination is available at the Student Health Center.**

Signs and symptoms of bacterial meningitis can include high fever, severe headache or stiff neck. These symptoms can develop over several hours, or they may take one to two days. The average incubation period is less than four days, but it can range between two and 10 days. Most people with meningitis are hospitalized and treated with antibiotics.

Close contact is exposure to the ill person's respiratory secretions through sharing of eating utensils, cigarettes, kissing, or close face-to-face prolonged contact. To prevent the spread of all infectious disease, frequent hand-washing and avoiding sharing of drinking cups and smoking devices is recommended.

People at high risk of infection include those with decreased immunity, smokers, and those whose spleen is damaged or has been removed. Get vaccinated!

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