
To:	General Practices, Pharmacists, After-Hours Centres and Emergency Departments in the greater Wellington and Wairarapa regions
From:	Dr Annette Nesdale, Medical Officer of Health
Date:	9 November 2018
Title:	Meningococcal disease

Please distribute the following information to relevant staff in your organisation.

All public health alerts are available at www.rph.org.nz/publichealthalerts

Meningococcal disease and public health follow up

Regional Public Health (RPH) has been notified of 9 people with meningococcal disease in the greater Wellington region this year. Sadly, this week a university student in the halls of residence died of meningococcal disease. Understandably, students, their parents and staff at Te Puni Village hall of residence are upset and concerned. RPH is identifying people who were close contacts of the student i.e. have had very close prolonged contact (e.g. slept overnight in the same room, intimate kissing or unprotected mouth-to-mouth resuscitation). These close contacts will be provided with antibiotic prophylaxis by RPH. People who have shared food or drinks, or live at Te Puni Village (who did not have close contact as described above) do not require antibiotics. Public health nurses will be on-site at Te Puni Village this afternoon (4 to 6pm) to provide information and advice. I have attached a copy of the letter sent to students and staff at Te Puni Village.

If you are contacted by people concerned about their potential exposure in this recent situation, we would be grateful if you could re-iterate the advice above. It is also useful to remind people about the symptoms of concern for meningococcal disease and the action to take. We are very happy to telephone any students or parents who would like additional information. RPH staff can be contacted after hours on our usual number 04 570 9002.

Useful resources on the signs and symptoms of meningococcal disease can be found at:

<https://www.healthed.govt.nz/resource/meningococcal-disease-know-symptoms>

<https://www.healthed.govt.nz/resource/meningococcal-disease-dont-wait-take-action>

9 November 2018

To: Residents at Te Puni hall of residence

Meningococcal disease information

Very sadly a student at Te Puni died late on Wednesday. Laboratory testing has now confirmed meningococcal disease as the cause of death. Meningococcal disease is caused by bacteria that live in the back of the nose or throat and usually this does not cause disease. The bacteria are passed from person to person in very close, prolonged contact such as sleeping in the same room or intimate kissing. Sharing food or drinks or a kiss on the cheek is not close contact. Close contacts of the person may be given antibiotics. The main purpose of the antibiotics is to treat people who may be carrying the bacteria in the back of the nose and throat and stop the spread of the disease. Antibiotics to eliminate carriage of the bacteria will not stop the development of the disease if someone is already developing the illness. Other people do not need antibiotics. While secondary cases (e.g. a second case in a family or other close group) occasionally occur, the bacteria do not live long outside the human body and are not passed readily from person to person like the flu or common cold.

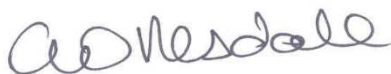
Regional Public Health is working with Te Puni staff and the Victoria University Student Health Service to provide information to residents and identify close contacts. **Regional Public Health staff will be onsite at Te Puni hall of residence between 4-6pm today to provide information and answer any questions.**

Meningococcal disease can be either meningitis (infection in the linings of the brain and spinal cord) or septicaemia (infection in the blood). The disease may start with a 'flu like illness, and then rapidly progress to a more serious illness with fever, headache, drowsiness, vomiting, stiff neck, a skin rash like blood spots under the skin, and sensitivity to bright lights. Further information can be accessed at www.healthed.govt.nz/resource/meningococcal-disease-know-symptoms.

It can be very hard to tell meningococcal disease from the flu in the early stages. If you become unwell with a combination of these symptoms you should consult your doctor or After Hours Medical Centre urgently. Tell your doctor about your contact with meningococcal disease. I suggest you take this letter with you.

Our thoughts are with you and the university community at this very sad time.

Regards



Dr Annette Nesdale
Medical Officer of Health

Further public health advice:

Service	Contact details	Comment
Regional Public Health	Office hours (8am to 5pm) 04 570 9002 RPH after hours 04 570 9007	Most enquiries about the public health follow up are best answered by the public health nurse team in office hours. For urgent enquiries about public health follow up. Ask to speak to the on-call person for meningococcal disease at Regional Public Health.
Healthline	0800 611 116 for free 24-hour health advice	Healthline is a free telephone health information service for all the family. The service is staffed by registered nurses who will assess your health needs, and give information and advice.
Ministry of Health	www.moh.govt.nz	Further information available on this useful website