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Dear Arcata High School Families:

Last week I reached out to you regarding concern about a possible case of meningitis caused by a bacteria called *Neisseria meningitidis*, in a student attending Arcata High School. Humboldt County Public Health had been in contact with physicians evaluating the patient to determine whether a *Neisseria* infection was known or suspected. At that time, because of the full clinical picture, the physicians did not consider *Neisseria meningitidis* a likely diagnosis. The health department asked that we be notified if that situation changed.

Humboldt County Public Health has now been notified of newly received results indicating an unusual type of *Neisseria meningitidis* infection. The student is currently hospitalized and under treatment.

Although the risk of another student becoming ill is extremely low, Humboldt County Public Health is choosing to be extremely cautious in this situation. We are recommending that close contacts of the student consider antibiotic preventive medicine. In this case, the student would have been contagious between 2/24 and 3/3. Individuals whose last close contact was more than 14 days ago, do not need antibiotics. Close contacts are those living in the same household or those who had shared oral secretions, as by kissing or sharing foods, drinks, water bottles, cigarettes or other smoking materials, lipstick, etc.

For all other persons, including those who had casual contact as would occur in most school-related activities, the risk of infection is extraordinary low, very close to the same risk that all Americans have (one case per 100,000 population/year). For them, antibiotic prophylaxis is NOT indicated and is not advised.

Area healthcare providers have been sent information on this situation. If you are a close contact, please call your healthcare provider's office regarding preventive antibiotics. If you do not have a healthcare provider or have questions, please contact Public Health at 445-6201 and ask to speak to a nurse about meningitis.

Although the risk of disease to other students is extremely low, in situations like these, parents are advised to be alert for signs of *Neisseria meningitidis* disease. These include, but are not limited to: fever, headache, stiff neck, and/or rash that does not fade when pressed on (suggesting bleeding under the skin). If any of these signs or symptoms should develop, the student should be taken immediately to a



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Public Health
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Social Services
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physician or emergency room to be evaluated for possible meningococcal disease. In most cases, antibiotic treatment of the disease is successful, especially if it is started early.

To reduce the spread and the risk of this communicable disease, we recommend that students avoid intimate contact and NOT share foods, drinks, lipstick/balm, and cigarettes, etc.

The patient and his family are in all of our thoughts. His mother asks for privacy at this time. Again, if you have questions, please telephone Public Health at 445-6201 and ask to speak to a nurse about meningitis.

Sincerely,

Teresa Frankovich

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