

HEALTH ALERT

Dear Parent:

We were informed today that one of our students passed away this morning. Today following hospital evaluation, the student was diagnosed as having meningitis. At this time the City of Houston Department of Health and Human Services has not been able to determine the type of meningitis as either bacterial or viral. Due to the seriousness of this disease, the health department is treating this case as bacterial until conclusive test results are received.

Meningococcal disease is caused by the bacterium *Neisseria meningitidis*. It is very common for healthy persons to carry bacteria of this type in the nose and throat without symptoms or illness. In rare instances, disease results from infections of the blood and central nervous system with the bacteria. The bacteria are spread by close contact with an infected person's discharges from the nose and throat.

Preventive medication is generally recommended to persons who have had continuous, close contact with an infected individual, such as household members, close friends, and other intimate contacts.

In this case, persons who have been identified as having close contacts with the infected person will be notified and will receive treatment by the City of Houston Department of Health and Human Services. The Department has assured us that it will continue to monitor the situation and will inform our administration if it is determined that additional individuals should also receive medication.

Secondary cases in schools generally do not occur. However, we feel it is important that you be aware of the symptoms of meningococcal disease. These symptoms may include **fever, headache, lethargy, stiff neck and back, and nausea and vomiting, with or without rash**. Most people who become ill with meningococcal disease develop symptoms within 3 - 4 days of exposure. However, this period (incubation) may range from 2 – 10 days. If your child should experience any of these symptoms, contact your child's physician immediately.

Counseling will be available on Monday for students through the HISD Psychological Services. If you have any questions, you should call your family physician. You may also contact the Houston Department of Health and Human Services, Bureau of Epidemiology at (713) 794-9181 or the HISD West Region at 713-662-2142.

Sincerely,

Anastasia Lindo-Anderson
Principal