

NEW JERSEY AIDS/HIV/STD HOTLINE**PRESS RELEASE**

July 2015

Warning to MSM Communities at Large Get Vaccinated for Meningococcal Disease

Newark, NJ – Recent reports of a growing outbreak of meningococcal meningitis in MSM (men who have sex with men) communities in Chicago, New York and Los Angeles have health officials around the country warning men who have sex with men to talk to their healthcare providers about getting vaccinated as soon as possible. Meningococcal meningitis is a very serious disease that can be fatal if not treated quickly.

HIV weakens the immune system, therefore, HIV infected men who have sex with men are at greatest risk of developing serious complications from meningococcal meningitis. This disease is caused by a bacterium (*Neisseria meningitidis*) spread by close personal contact with an infected person's saliva (spit) or nasal secretions - kissing, living in the same household/roommates, intimate sexual acts, sharing utensils/cups/smoking objects, coughing, etc. It is not spread through casual contact or simply breathing the air where an infected person has been. Symptoms such as high fever, stiff neck, severe and persistent headache, nausea, vomiting, confusion, drowsiness, and joint pain often develop suddenly, within days of being exposed.

MSM should heed the warning of health officials and get vaccinated as soon as they can. Getting vaccinated will help prevent possible outbreaks in other parts of the country. If you or someone you know is experiencing the symptoms above, seek medical attention immediately. The quicker you receive medical attention, the better off you will be.

If you have any questions regarding meningococcal meningitis, contact us (The New Jersey AIDS/HIV/STD Hotline) either by calling 800-624-2377, text/email at 8006242377@njpies.org, or chat via our site at www.njhivstdline.org; TTD/TTY Line (for the hearing impaired) 973-926-8008. We are always here to help 24 hours a day/ seven days a week/every day of the year! Calls are free and confidential.

- Referrals for testing sites and other related services
- HIV/AIDS, STD and Hepatitis Prevention Information
- Counseling and Treatment Locations
- Treatment Information

About NJPIES

As New Jersey's only poison control center, the New Jersey Poison Information & Education System provides information on poison prevention and treatments. Chartered in 1983, NJPIES provides free consultation through telephone hot line services and the Web. Medical professionals such as physicians, registered nurses and pharmacists offer confidential advice regarding poison emergencies and provide information on poison prevention, drugs, food poisoning, animal bites and more. These specialists are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

NJPIES coordinates state poison education and research and is designated as the regional poison center by the New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services and the American Association of Poison Control Centers. It tracks incidences of adverse reactions to food, drugs and vaccines in order to monitor potential public health issues and provide data to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. A division of the Department of Emergency Medicine of the New Jersey Medical School of Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey. NJPIES has a state-of-the-art center located on the school's Newark campus. NJPIES is funded, in part, by the NJ Department of Health and the United States Department of Health and Human Services.

New Jersey residents seeking immediate information about treating poison emergencies, and those with any drug information questions, should call the toll-free hot line, 800-222-1222, any time. The hearing impaired may call 973-926-8008. For more information, visit www.njpies.org or call 973-972-9280.

About Rutgers

Established in 1766, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, is America's eighth oldest institution of higher learning and one of the nation's premier public research universities. Serving more than 65,000 students on campuses, centers, institutes and other locations throughout the state, Rutgers is the only public university in New Jersey that is a member of the prestigious Association of American Universities.

Rutgers Biomedical and Health Sciences (RBHS) is the health care education, research, and clinical division of Rutgers University, comprising nine schools and their attendant faculty practices, centers, institutes and clinics; New Jersey's leading comprehensive cancer care center; and New Jersey's largest behavioral health care network.

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