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Fatal Case of Serogroup B Meningococcal Disease

A fatal case of serogroup B meningococcal disease occurred in a 23 year old male who participated in a recent protest at the FTAA (Free Trade Area of the Americas) meeting held in Miami, Florida. The patient died on November 26th at a hospital in North Carolina.

A total of approximately 45-50 contacts who lived with, traveled with or had close respiratory secretion contact with the patient in the 2 weeks prior to the hospitalization have been offered antibiotic prophylaxis. State and local health departments and demonstration organizers are also working to identify any other reports of possible illness among demonstrators.

Meningococcal disease is an infection caused by a bacterium called *Neisseria meningitidis* or the meningococcus. The meningococcus lives in the throat of 5-10% of healthy people. Rarely, it can cause serious illness such as meningitis or blood infection.

The meningococcus is spread from person to person by direct contact with oral secretions. It is not spread by casual contact or by simply breathing the air where a person with meningitis has been. Persons living in the same household or with direct contact with a patient's oral secretions may be at increased risk of infection and should receive antibiotics to help prevent illness. Serogroup B meningococcal disease is not prevented by the currently licensed meningococcal vaccine.

The incubation period from exposure to symptoms of meningococcal disease is usually 2 to 10 days. Symptoms may then progress over several hours or several days.

Clinicians and health departments should consider meningococcal meningitis as a possible diagnosis for patients presenting with fever, headache, and stiff neck. Other symptoms may include nausea, vomiting, discomfort looking into bright lights, confusion, and sleepiness. Patients with meningococcal bloodstream infection (i.e., sepsis) may present with fever and a petechial or purpuric rash.

Possible cases should be reported to state health departments. State health departments are asked to report any possible cases under investigation to CDC (770 488-7100).

For additional information on meningococcal disease see

http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dbmd/diseaseinfo/meningococcal_g.htm

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) protects people's health and safety by preventing and controlling diseases and injuries; enhances health decisions by providing credible information on critical health issues; and promotes healthy living through strong partnerships with local, national and international organizations.

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

