



Linn County

Department of Health Services

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www.co.linn.or.us/health

"Working together to promote the health and well-being of all Linn County residents"

1/20/2018

Dear parent/guardian,

Linn County Public Health is following up on a case of meningococcal (bacterial) meningitis in a second grade student at Green Acres Elementary School. Meningococcal disease is not highly contagious, but close contacts of cases are at higher risk and should get antibiotics to prevent disease. Local public health nurses are required to investigate each case and recommend antibiotics as needed. Public Health is working with the school to identify those students and staff with close, face-to-face contact generally defined as those with direct, close contact to the ill child for at least 4 hours between 01/09/2018 and 1/12/2018.

Public Health will telephone the parents of the identified students and any staff that may have had significant exposures and recommend that the exposed individuals take preventative antibiotics. Unless identified as significantly exposed, other classmates do not require medication because they are not considered close contacts.

Please note, there is no increased risk to students and staff not identified as close contacts – their risk remains the same as the general population.

Meningococcal disease is caused by *Neisseria meningitidis*, a bacterium that lives in the noses and throats of 5 percent to 10 percent of the population. It causes serious disease only if it enters the blood stream and spreads through the body. Meningococcal meningitis occurs when the bacteria causes inflammation of the tissue surrounding the brain and spinal cord.

Although the risk to other students is quite low, parents are advised to be alert for signs of meningococcal disease. These include, but are not limited to high fever, vomiting, headache, stiff neck, and/or a rash. If parents see these symptoms in their child, they should contact their health care provider immediately. Those who are treated promptly with antibiotics usually do well.

Call Public Health at 541-967-3888, ext. 2488 if you have questions.

Sincerely,

Dr. William Muth
Linn County Health Officer