San Francisco Department of Public Health



Barbara A. Garcia, MPA Director of Health

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE December 6, 2012

Eileen Shields, Public Information Officer 415/554-2507 (o) 415/370-3377 (cell) Eileen.Shields@sfdph.org

Consider Vaccination to Prevent Meningitis for Certain San Francisco Men Traveling to New York City

San Francisco, CA – San Francisco health officials are asking local health professionals and the public to take note of recent recommendations by New York City (NYC) health authorities. On November 29, 2012, after noting an increase in cases of meningococcal disease among men who have sex with men (MSM) in NYC, the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (NYC-DOHMH) expanded its recommendations to vaccinate certain MSM residing in NYC against meningococcal meningitis.

Over the past year, 12 cases of meningococcal disease were identified among MSM in NYC, including three new cases in the past six weeks, prompting health officials in New York City to recommend meningococcal vaccine for certain MSM who have had, or will have, intimate contact with men they met through websites, digital applications "apps", or at a bar or party.

In San Francisco, there has been no recent outbreak of meningococcal disease. However, San Francisco Department of Public Health (SFDPH) officials are taking action in order to inform and protect San Francisco residents who could become infected with meningococcal disease, specifically during travel to NYC. On December 3, 2012, SFDPH distributed a Health Advisory informing San Francisco clinicians of its recommendations (http://sfcdcp.org/healthalerts.html).

Tomas Aragon, MD, Health Officer for the City and County of San Francisco, stated, "We want San Francisco men who have sex with men to know about the New York City recommendations so that they can make good health choices. MSM planning travel to NYC who anticipate having close or intimate contact with MSM in New York City, and MSM who have recently traveled to New York City and had close or intimate contact with MSM there, should be aware of the New York City meningococcal disease outbreak and ought to discuss vaccination with their doctor."

Background on Meningococcal Disease

Meningococcal disease is a severe infection caused by the bacteria *Neisseria meningitidis*, which causes meningitis by infecting the tissues surrounding the brain and spinal cord. It can also cause an infection of the blood. Even if diagnosed early and treated with antibiotics, it can still sometimes result in death, permanent brain damage, hearing loss, or kidney failure. Meningococcal disease is transmitted by contact with spit, phlegm, mucus, or other fluids from the nose or mouth of someone who has the disease. Typically this occurs from kissing, intimate

The mission of the San Francisco Department of Public Health is to protect and promote the health of all San Franciscans.

We shall ~ Assess and research the health of the community ~ Develop and enforce health policy ~ Prevent disease and injury ~

Educate the public and train health care providers ~ Provide quality, comprehensive, culturally-proficient health services ~ Ensure equal access to all

or sexual contact, sneezing or coughing, living in a crowded space together, or sharing drinks, cigarettes or eating utensils with someone who is already infected.

Background on Meningococcal Vaccination

Meningococcal vaccination is routinely recommended by the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) for students entering middle school and high school, for college students living in dormitories, for military recruits, and for people with certain medical conditions like a damaged or missing spleen. It is also recommended for persons traveling to places with ongoing outbreaks of meningococcal disease, such as sub-Saharan Africa. Meningococcal vaccination is not routinely recommended for MSM or people with HIV except under particular circumstances, such as those currently prevailing in NYC. Most adults gain protection from meningococcal disease with a single injection of the meningitis vaccine. Some adults, including those with HIV or other causes of weakened immune function, are recommended to receive a total of 2 injections of the vaccine spaced 2 months apart, in order to achieve protection. According to the CDC, vaccination is 80-90% effective in preventing meningococcal disease.

INFORMATIONAL LINKS

- San Francisco Department of Public Health: http://sfcdcp.org/meningococcal.html
- $\bullet \ Centers \ for \ Disease \ Control: \ \underline{http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm6003a3.htm} \ and \ \underline{http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/rr5407a1.htm}$
- NYC Department of Health: http://www.nyc.gov/html/doh/html/pr2012/pr036-12.shtml