



WILL COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT
&
COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTER

For Immediate Release

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Direct News Media Calls to Vic Reato: Media Services Manager at (815)727-5088.

MENINGOCOCCAL DISEASE CONFIRMED IN JOLIET TOWNSHIP STUDENT

JOLIET – Laboratory testing has confirmed that a 17-year-old Joliet Central high school student is ill with meningococemia, a severe bloodborne infection caused by *Neisseria meningitidis* bacteria.

The student was hospitalized October 21, after complaining of severe chills, fever, and a sore throat. Laboratory testing confirmed the presence of *Neisseria meningitidis* bacteria in the blood Friday. A senior at Central campus, the student was hospitalized in pediatric intensive care as of noon Friday, and is responding to treatment.

Meningococcal disease is a potentially serious bacterial infection which commonly occurs in two forms. Bacteria infecting the membranes covering the brain and spinal chord produce what is usually referred to as meningococcal meningitis. The infection is called meningococemia when the bacteria reaches the blood stream.

Meningococcal infection is not highly contagious, but can be transmitted from person to person through direct contact with nose and throat secretions. Transmission is most often linked to kissing and sharing eating utensils. Coughing or sneezing directly into the face may also result in disease transmission.

In the wake of the meningococemia confirmation, all athletic and after-school activities scheduled for the Joliet Central campus have been canceled for Friday evening and Saturday. The health department is working closely with District 204 officials to secure a list of close contacts to the ill student. Close contacts are treated with antibiotics.

Although the risk of disease transmission is low, students should consult a health care provider if they develop a high fever accompanied by a stiff neck, behavioral changes, or a rash.

Neisseria meningitidis bacteria do not live on surfaces and are not transmitted through casual contact. Riding on a bus, or breathing the same air as a person infected with *Neisseria Meningitidis* should not generally be a cause for concern.

A letter explaining disease symptoms and outlining general concerns is being provided to all Joliet Central parents. District 204 has conducted a general school cleaning, and conducted staff and student awareness.

Joliet Central took preventative measures and cleaned all areas using Arena 891, held a meeting for all staff, placed hand sanitizer in all staff mailboxes, and informed staff to read a message to students that addressed the importance of hygiene. In addition, parents and guardians received a call from the home messenger system," said Principal John Randich.

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