



**BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**

205 NW Fifth Street  
P.O. Box 3020  
Corvallis, OR 97339-3020  
(541) 766-6800  
FAX (541) 766-6893

**NEWS RELEASE**

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For further information, contact:

Rick Osborn, Public Information Officer, Benton County Board of Commissioners  
(541) 766-6082, [rick.osborn@co.benton.or.us](mailto:rick.osborn@co.benton.or.us)

**County, school officials respond to diagnosed case  
of meningococcal disease**

CORVALLIS, Ore. – A Corvallis High School student is being treated at Good Samaritan Regional Medical Center for diagnosed meningococcal disease.

The Benton County Health Department is working with medical providers, Corvallis School District and family members to identify anyone who may have had enough close exposure to require preventive antibiotic treatment. The investigation is being conducted carefully, but since the disease is not easily spread from one person to another, it is unlikely there will be many who actually need preventive treatment.

Meningococcal is an uncommon disease caused by bacteria present in the throat or nasal passages of about 10 percent of the general population. Most people can carry the bacteria and never become ill. It is not highly contagious, generally striking fewer than one person out of every 100,000 per year. It is transmitted through direct contact with droplets from coughing or sneezing, or other discharges from the nose or throat. Those at risk of catching meningococcal disease have spent at least 4 hours cumulatively in close, face-to-face association with the ill person within one week of the patient’s symptom onset.

Symptoms of the disease are high fever, headache and stiff neck. Some people do not get meningitis, but they get infection of the bloodstream, which causes fever and a rash. This rash develops rapidly and usually appears on the armpits, groin and ankles, as well as in areas where elastic pressure is applied. Symptoms usually appear in three to four days, but can appear within two to 10 days. In the case of the Corvallis High School student, symptoms appeared on May 31.

“This is an extremely rare condition and it is difficult to contract meningococcal disease, as it takes significant prolonged direct contact,” Benton County Health Department Deputy Director Charlie Fautin said. “We are working to identify anyone who may have come into contact with the patient and determining whether preventive treatment is in order to prevent any possible spread. Anyone who experiences symptoms should contact their health provider.”

Benton County Health Department is working with the Corvallis School District and medical providers with Samaritan Health Services to identify anyone who falls into the

risk categories and may have had enough close exposure to need preventive antibiotic treatment. Those who are concerned about exposure should contact their health care provider or a Benton County Communicable Disease Nurse at 541-766-6835.

The best way to prevent meningococcal disease is by vaccination. Other ways to lower the risk of infection include the following:

- Stop smoking – studies have shown that smokers are three to four times more likely to contract the disease;
- Don't let children be in rooms where people are smoking;
- Prevent respiratory tract infections by receiving influenza vaccine and avoiding close contact with people with coughs and colds; and
- Frequent hand-washing.

Vaccination against meningococcal disease is recommended for all children 11 to 18 years old and for college freshmen living in dorms. To get vaccinated, those interested can contact their health care provider or call the Benton County Health Department at 541-766-6835 to schedule an appointment.

“We take the health and safety of our students very seriously and so we are working with the Benton County Health Department to ensure a safe and healthy learning environment for our students and staff,” Corvallis School District Assistant Superintendent Kevin Bogatin said. “We would like to remind people not to be alarmed, but to exercise reasonable caution.”

**Media Contacts:**

- **Charlie Fautin**, Benton County Health Department, 541-766-6840;
- **Kevin Bogatin**, Corvallis School District, 541-757-5724; and
- **Janelle Iverson**, Good Samaritan Regional Medical Center, 541-768-5090

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