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| **DATE:** October 1, 2014 | |

**HEADLINE:** Bacterial Meningitis Confirmed in University of Idaho Student

LEWISTON, IDAHO – Public Health - Idaho North Central District has been notified of the diagnosis of septicemia caused by *Neisseria meningitidis* in a student attending the University of Idaho.

Public Health continues to work with officials from the University of Idaho to identify close contacts of the ill student who may benefit from preventative antibiotic treatment.

Early treatment with antibiotics may effectively prevent the disease. The risk to the general public of contracting this infection is very low. Contacts will be considered for preventative antibiotic treatment if they had close contact with the student.

Those considered close contacts include household members, people socially close enough to have shared saliva (eating utensils, cigarettes, food and beverage containers) and/or anyone directly exposed to nasopharyngeal secretions from the student. Transmission occurs by droplets or direct contact with infected nasal or throat secretions.

Symptoms associated with meningococcal infections may include: fever, severe headache, chills, stiff neck, confusion, nausea, vomiting, joint or muscle pain and sometimes a red or purple rash. Persons experiencing these symptoms should seek immediate medical attention. The time from exposure to signs and symptoms of this bacterial illness are usually 3-4 days with a range of 2-10 days.

Meningococcal vaccine is recommended for all students, particularly those in dense living situations such as residence halls and Greek housing. For students vaccinated five or more years ago, a booster vaccine is recommended. Students may obtain vaccinations through Student Health, Public Health – Idaho North Central District, or private providers.

Good hand hygiene is important to control the spread of the disease. Everyone should cover both mouth and nose when sneezing or coughing and wash hands thoroughly and dispose of used tissues. Sharing of common items such as eating utensils and drinking cups should be avoided.