

Meningococcal Outbreak in Eastern Iowa

February 10, 2023

Dear Colleague,

The Iowa Department of Health and Human Services (Iowa HHS) has detected an increase in meningococcal disease (illness caused by *Neisseria meningitidis*) activity in eastern Iowa. Nine cases of invasive meningococcal disease have been reported between November 2022 and February 2023. Whole genome sequencing has been performed on six of the nine cases and the cases have been found to be genetically linked, which constitutes a community outbreak of meningococcal disease.

Cases are clustered in the eastern part of the state and span a wide demographic. To date, there has not been an identified common risk factor among the cases and the cases are suspected to be connected by asymptomatic community transmission.

Early identification and reporting of cases are key to preventing further transmission. Public health responds immediately to reports of meningococcal disease by rapidly identifying close contacts for prophylaxis to prevent transmission. The following steps are recommended for health care providers:

- Remain vigilant for suspected cases of meningococcal infection, especially in patients presenting with sudden onset of fever, headache, stiff neck, photophobia, altered mental status, severe aches/pain, rapid breathing, and/or in later stages a dark purple rash.
- Identification of *N. meningitidis* from a normally sterile site is immediately reportable to the Center for Acute Disease Epidemiology (CADE) at 515-242-5935 (during business hours) or 515-323-4360 (outside business hours). CADE will assist in coordinating isolates being sent to the State Hygienic Laboratory for serotyping.
- Encourage routine vaccination of MenACWY vaccine in adolescents and younger children, also including children and adults at increased risk of infection.

Contact CADE with questions or concerns at 515-242-5935.

Sincerely,

Robert Kruse, MD, MPH

State Medical Director