

## Whitman County Health Department

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 15, 2012

On Sunday, October 14, 2012, the Whitman County Public Health Department was notified by Pullman Regional Hospital of a 19 year old Washington State University student with Meningococcal Disease. The student was later transferred to a Spokane hospital. Local Public Health Officials are working with Washington State University's Student Health to identify close contacts of the ill student who may benefit from antibiotic prophylaxis or treatment. Transmission of the illness occurs by droplets or direct contact with infected nasal or throat secretions. Those considered close contact includes; household members, people socially close enough to have shared saliva (eating utensils, cigarettes, food, etc.) and/or anyone directly exposed to nasopharyngeal secretions (mucus and saliva from coughing or runny noses) from the student. Early treatment with antibiotics may effectively treat the bacteria. The risk of illness or of contracting this infection is very low for the general public

Symptoms associated with bacterial meningococcal infections may include: fever, severe headache, chills, stiff neck, confusion, nausea, vomiting, joint or muscle pain and sometimes a red or purple rash. Person experiencing these systems should seek immediate medical attention.

The use of good hand hygiene is important to control the spread of disease. Children and adults should cover both mouth and nose, use good respiratory etiquette, wash their hands thoroughly, and dispose of used tissues. Sharing common items such as eating utensils and drinking cups should be avoided.

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