

Meningitis case treated successfully

by Jason Gillikin
Editor in Chief

A student infected with bacterial meningitis in early September has made a full recovery, and no further cases have been identified, according to officials with the Sindecuse Health Center.

The student, who was not identified for privacy reasons, contracted the rare illness shortly before the Labor Day recess. The student resides in a Western Michigan University residence hall; the person's roommates were vaccinated against the illness, according to SHC officials.

Bacterial meningitis is an inflammation of the lining surrounding the brain and spinal cord. Although meningitis can be contracted from several sources — including viruses, fungi and bacteria — the bacterial form can be fatal; those infected can die or suffer loss of limb within 24 hours of infection. Viral

meningitis is akin to a cold with a severe headache; this form is much more common and much less threatening.

A letter detailing the preventative measures to avoid contracting bacterial meningitis was issued Friday by Diane Anderson, WMU vice president for student affairs and dean of students and Dr. Rick Tooker, Kalamazoo County's public health officer.

Tooker and Anderson recommend that people use standard precautionary measures to reduce the risk of infection, including frequent hand-washing and reducing contact with other people's bodily fluids.

Students interested in vaccination should contact SHC at 387-3290; vaccinations are available for \$82. For more information about bacterial meningitis, contact the Kalamazoo County Human Services Department at (269) 373-5200.

Left: Letter to WMU students from Diane Anderson, WMU vice president for student affairs, and Dr. Richard Tooker, Kalamazoo County's chief medical officer. Below: Quick facts about bacterial meningitis, from the Sindecuse Health Center.

What is meningitis?

Meningitis is an inflammation of the lining surrounding the brain and spinal cord. It can be caused by bacteria, viruses or fungi.

How is bacterial meningitis spread?

Through intimate or direct exposure to an infected person within seven days. Such contact includes kissing, sharing eating utensils, drinking from the same cup, sharing cigarettes, or encountering droplet contamination from an infected person.

What are the symptoms of bacterial meningitis?

Sudden headache, fever, stiff neck, nausea, vomiting, confusion, sensitivity to light.

How can I prevent infection?

Frequent and thorough hand-washing and avoiding exposure to potential contaminants (e.g., items containing another person's saliva). There is a vaccine available for a fee from the Sindecuse Health Center. Call 387-3290 for more information.

— Source: Sindecuse Health Center