



**For Immediate Release**

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## **Meningitis Outbreak Among Gay/Bisexual Men in Los Angeles**

*Find out if you should get vaccinated*

### **Protect Yourself Against Meningitis!**

In June 2016, the L.A. County Department of Public Health reported an increase in cases of meningococcal disease—commonly called meningitis—over the previous several weeks. Many of these cases were among men who have sex with men (MSM). People with HIV and MSM are at a higher risk. While the risk is relatively small, the disease is potentially life-threatening. You can take steps to minimize your risk, including getting vaccinated.

### ***What is meningococcal disease and what are the symptoms?***

Meningococcal disease is an infection that inflames the brain and spinal cord. Symptoms include fever, vomiting, severe headache, stiff neck, confusion, light sensitivity, rash and generalized muscle pains. Many people with the disease report an inability to touch their chin to their chest. These symptoms typically begin just a few days after exposure. If you experience these symptoms, you should seek medical care immediately.

### ***How is it spread?***

Meningococcal disease is spread through saliva and mucus, which means it can be spread through coughing, kissing, and sharing food, drinks, cigarettes, etc. Outbreaks are common in group living situations like dorms and homeless shelters.

### ***Am I at risk?***

Men who have sex with men and people living with HIV are more at risk than most people for contracting the disease. Gay/bi men with multiple partners are at a higher risk. Things that increase risk include:

- Spending lots of time in crowded venues like parties, bars, etc.
- Using online apps like Grindr or Scruff for hooking up

--Sharing drinks, food, or utensils, or sharing cigarettes, marijuana, etc.

--Kissing

***How can I protect myself?***

We recommend that all people living with HIV and MSM get the meningococcal vaccine. If you're HIV-positive, it's two shots given a couple months apart. The vaccine lasts for five years.

**We offer the vaccine for free at two locations:**

**Baldwin Hills: Gleicher/Chen Health Center**

**323.329.9900**

**Long Beach: Long Beach Health Center**

**562.432.7300**

