



County of Fairfax, Virginia

To protect and enrich the quality of life for the people, neighborhoods and diverse communities of Fairfax County

May 27, 2010

Dear Parent or Guardian,

We are writing to inform you that an individual who played basketball with your child on May 15, May 16, or May 22, 2010 in the Chantilly Youth Association Basketball League has been diagnosed with meningococcal disease. The Health Department has conducted an investigation and is **not** recommending preventive measures for any of the players in this league. However, we wanted to make you aware of this situation and provide you with the following information.

Meningococcal disease is caused by infection with a type of bacteria known as *Neisseria meningitidis*. **Meningococcal disease is not highly contagious and is spread by direct contact with nose and throat secretions.** This can occur when an infected person coughs or sneezes directly in someone's face, or by kissing or sharing personal items such as eating utensils, cups, water bottles, or lip balm/lipstick. The bacteria do not survive for more than a few minutes on environmental surfaces (such as chairs and desks) and casual contact in the school setting does not usually spread disease.

People exposed to this organism may carry it in their nose and throat without developing symptoms. Only a very small number of exposed individuals develop a serious illness, such as meningitis (infection of the tissue around the brain and spinal cord) or a bloodstream infection. **Common symptoms include fever and chills, severe headache, stiff neck, nausea and vomiting, sensitivity to bright light, and possibly a rash. If your child should develop these symptoms, you should consult your physician immediately.** It can take from 2 to 10 days from the time of exposure for symptoms to develop (usually within 5 days).

The best way to prevent the spread of meningococcal disease is to avoid sharing food, drinks, cigarettes, or other similar items. It is also important, as with many other diseases, to cover your mouth when coughing or sneezing and to wash hands thoroughly and regularly.

More information on meningococcal disease is available at <http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/epidemiology/factsheets/Meningococcal.htm>

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact the Fairfax County Health Department's Communicable Disease Unit at 703-246-2433.

Sincerely,

Gloria Addo-Ayensu, MD, MPH
Director of Health

Fairfax County Health Department

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Communicable Disease/Epidemiology Program
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