



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Outbreak of Meningococcal Disease in Southern California Highlights Importance of Vaccinations Against Communicable Disease**

*California Infectious Disease Doctors Urge Residents to Talk to Their Doctor About Appropriate Vaccination Plan*

Los Angeles (July 5, 2016) – The Infectious Disease Association of California (IDAC) today urged Californians to talk to their doctors about available and appropriate adult vaccinations in light of recent cases of invasive meningococcal disease (IMD) in Los Angeles and Orange Counties. Health officials have identified nine IMD (serogroup C) cases in the last two months, and one patient has died as a result of the infection.

IMD is caused by the *Neisseria meningitidis* bacteria, and can be spread by saliva and mucus through coughing, sneezing, or close contact activities, including kissing, sharing eating utensils, glasses, cups, toothbrushes, or cigarettes. The meningococcal bacteria, however, cannot live for more than a few minutes outside the body and, as such, the disease is not spread as easily as the common cold or flu.

Adults with increased risk include those who:

- Regularly have close or intimate contact with multiple partners, or who seek partners through the use of online websites or phone digital applications.
- Regularly visit crowded venues such as bars, parties, etc.
- Smoke cigarettes, marijuana or illegal drugs, or spend time in smoky settings.

With symptoms similar to a cold or flu, this disease is often overlooked, until it is too late. Even with proper and timely treatment, fatalities still occur in 10-15% of cases, and those that survive may never fully recover—facing devastating and life-long medical conditions, including impaired hearing, disruption to the nervous system, and the loss of limbs. Each year bacterial Meningitis affects around 2,600 Americans in communities throughout the country.

Symptoms can include:

- Fever
- Headache
- Stiff neck
- Nausea/vomiting

- Red rash
- Sensitivity to bright lights
- Confusion/irritability

Persons with symptoms should immediately seek medical attention, to be safe.

To combat IMD, the proper course is *prevention*. There are currently vaccines available to protect against all strains of meningitis. IDAC encourages all Californians to consult with their doctor about the available and appropriate vaccine schedule.

**About Infectious Disease Association of California**

Founded in 1985, the Infectious Disease Association of California (IDAC) is a non-profit corporation providing continuing medical education to medical doctors in California with an interest in clinical infectious diseases. IDAC is affiliated with the Infectious Diseases Society of America and the HIV Medicine Association and is a recognized specialty organization by the California Medical Association. IDAC is also an accredited CME provider. For more information, visit <http://www.idac.org>