

Dear campus community:

University Health Services (UHS) is writing today to advise you that a student has been diagnosed with a meningococcal illness and is being treated in an area hospital.

UHS is coordinating with local and state health officials and reaching out to people who may have been in close contact with the student and have the most significant risk of infection. There are safe and effective antibiotics that can reduce the possibility of infection.

The student has been diagnosed with a serious illness caused by the bacteria named *Neisseria meningitidis*. This germ can sometimes cause meningitis (infection of the tissue that covers the brain and spinal cord) or sepsis (an infection of the blood), which can be fatal if not treated. This bacteria can be contagious, but it is typically transmitted through close personal contact such as coughing, sharing drinks and kissing. None of the bacteria are as contagious as the common cold or the flu, and they are not spread by casual contact or by simply breathing the air where a person with this illness has been.

University Health Services encourages members of the campus community to be health smart. Don't swap spit, avoid sharing food, drinks and personal items that contact saliva. Wash hands with soap and water or hand sanitizer. Cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue or your sleeve. Don't touch your eyes, nose, or mouth—germs spread easily this way. If you are sick, have fever, or other concerns, University Health Services is here to help you.

Members of the campus community who have related concerns should contact University Health Services or their own health care provider. The UHS triage nurse can be reached at (413) 577-5229.

More information about meningococcal disease is available on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website (<https://www.cdc.gov/meningococcal/index.html>).

Sincerely,

Dr. George Corey

Executive Director

University Health Services