



MID-MICHIGAN DISTRICT HEALTH DEPARTMENT

An Accredited Local Public Health Department

www.mmdhd.org

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March 19, 2008

Robert Lange, Superintendent
St. Louis Public Schools
113 E. Saginaw Street
St. Louis, MI 48880

Re: Carrie Knause School Student diagnosed with Meningitis

The Communicable Disease staff of the Mid-Michigan District Health Department (MMDHD) has been notified that a student in the Carrie Knause School building has been diagnosed with a type of meningitis.

The student is currently undergoing treatment for bacterial meningitis, caused by the bacteria *Haemophilus influenzae*. The symptoms of meningitis are fever, headache, stiff neck, lethargy, altered state of alertness, and in severe cases, seizures. Treatment includes antibiotic therapy. Anyone experiencing these symptoms should immediately be seen by a doctor.

Only household contacts need to be given prophylactic treatment. MMDHD staff is working to assure the student's family receives the appropriate treatment. Classmates, those that ride on a school bus with the student, and other casual contacts do not need to receive prophylactic treatment. Studies have shown that more extensive prophylaxis is not necessary to stop the spread of these bacteria.

The germ that causes *Haemophilus influenzae* is spread by respiratory droplets and discharges from the nose and throat. Routine cleaning of desks, chairs, floors and other surfaces is all that is necessary in this situation. Another important defensive action is routine hand washing. I advise all school districts to have their students wash their hands when they get to school, before they eat, after going to the bathroom and after recess. The best defense against *Haemophilus influenzae* is the routine and highly effective HIB childhood vaccination. Since the vaccine's introduction, the incidence of meningitis caused by *Haemophilus influenzae* has nearly fallen to zero.

If the parents of your students have any question they can call Wendy Currie, the public health communicable disease nurse in Gratiot County at 989-875-1019 for more information.

Sincerely,

Robert Graham, DO, MPH

*Your Public Health Experts;
Connecting with the Community and Exceeding Expectations.*