



National Public Health Institute Of Liberia

Preventing and Controlling Public Health Threats

May 16, 2017

Press Release

Recent Outbreak of Meningococcal Septicemia or Bacterial Infection in the Blood

On April 25, 2017, Sinoe County Health Team (SCHT) notified the National Public Health Institute of Liberia (NPHIL) and the Ministry of Health (MOH), of a cluster of unexplained health events involving 14 cases, with 8 deaths, in Greenville City. Cases presented with symptoms including, headaches, diarrhea, mental confusion, weakness, vomiting and abdominal pain. Many of the cases reported onset of symptoms, following attendance at funeral activities in Greenville, on April 21 and 22, 2017.

On April 26, 2017, the NPHIL Team, Ministry of Health, WHO and CDC, were deployed to support the county-led response. A pathologist supported by WHO, arrived on May 5, 2017 and autopsies were conducted May 6, 2017, on the bodies of the two cases identified in Montserrado County.

On May 13, 2017, laboratory teams from Liberia, WHO and CDC- Atlanta, conducted testing of additional samples at the National Reference Laboratory and **confirmed 13 positive cases of the bacteria, Neisseria Meningitidis** and one (1) from clinical symptoms. This means there are confirmations for 14 people, 11 of whom died and 3 survived, therefore **confirming that Neisseria Meningitides, caused the meningococcal septicemia outbreak in Sinoe County.**

Neisseria meningitides causes an infection of the brain or the blood. In Africa, we usually see the infection around the brain, which is called **meningitis**. In the cases in Liberia, we saw infection of the blood, which is called **meningococcal septicemia**. **Meningococcal diseases typically include** meningococcal meningitis and meningococcal **bloodstream** infection (septicemia). A person can have one or both. They can occur sporadically or in clusters/outbreaks. The disease is potentially vaccine-preventable.





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Incubation period is between two to ten days, with the peak being two to four days.


Given that we have passed the ten days incubation period with **no new infection and a heightened surveillance system across the 91 health districts in 15 counties, we have no further evidence of ongoing transmission of this disease in Liberia.**

Common symptoms include: fever, fatigue, stiff neck, severe headaches, vomiting, cold hands and feet, chills, or pain in the muscles, joints, chest or abdomen (belly), rapid breathing, diarrhea. In the later stages, a dark purple rash, which is called purpura, can appear. It is important to get treatment from a health center **IMMEDIATELY** if you have any of these symptoms. **This bacteria is treatable.** Treatment must begin quickly to prevent death.

The National Public Health Institute, MOH and partners, are encouraging the public to continue to take the following **preventive measures**:

- Report any deaths or sickness to the County Health Team and local authorities in any county, especially Sinoe, Montserrado and Grand Bassa counties.
- People who are having signs and symptoms should report to the nearest health facilities
- Prayer houses and traditional healers should report to local authorities persons presenting to them with signs and symptoms
- Reinforce hand washing practices
- For those persons who died and are linked to the unexplained cluster of illness and death in Sinoe, the Ministry of Health and NPHIL burial team will work with the families to conduct safe and dignified burials.

Meanwhile, the National Public Health institute of Liberia would like to **alert** the Liberian public of the EVD situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). Although high population movement between Liberia and DRC is unlikely, screening is intensified for international travelers at points of entry. Front line health workers are encouraged to enhance vigilance for viral hemorrhagic fever (VHF) and comply with universal infection, prevention and control precautions.


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