

Same meningitis strain behind Drexel, Princeton outbreaks

March 18 2014



Drexel student recently died from the bacterial infection.

(HealthDay)—The strain of bacterial meningitis that killed a Drexel University student earlier this month is the same strain behind a Princeton University outbreak last year, federal health officials said Tuesday.

This suggests that the outbreak strain might still be present in the Princeton community and that the situation requires close monitoring, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

After the Drexel student died March 10, the local health department identified people who had been in close contact with the student and gave them antibiotics to protect them from developing meningitis. So far, no further cases of meningitis have been reported among Drexel

students.

The investigation also revealed that the student had been in close contact with Princeton students about a week before becoming ill.

Drexel University is located in Philadelphia, and Princeton University is in New Jersey.

In response to last year's meningitis outbreak at Princeton, a [vaccination program](#) began on Dec. 9. A large percentage of undergraduate and eligible graduate students received the recommended two doses of the investigational vaccine used for this "B" strain of meningitis. The vaccine is not yet approved in the United States.

However, vaccinated people can still carry the meningitis bacteria in their throats and infect others through close contact, the CDC said.

Because there is no [meningitis outbreak](#) at Drexel, the university community there is not considered to be at increased risk. No vaccination program has been launched, but university officials and the local department of health are taking all the recommended measures to prevent additional cases of [meningitis](#), according to the CDC.

"We will continue to closely monitor the situation and determine next steps while local health authorities remain vigilant to recognizing and promptly treating any new cases," the agency said in a news release. "At this time, CDC does not recommend limiting social interactions or canceling travel plans as a preventive measure for meningococcal disease."

The CDC also said there is no evidence that family members and other people are at increased risk of being infected through casual contact with Princeton students, faculty or staff. People at highest risk are those who

have close, prolonged or face-to-face contact with an infected person.

"Students at both universities should be especially vigilant to the signs and symptoms of meningococcal disease and seek urgent treatment if suspected," CDC officials said. "Symptoms may include sudden onset of a high fever, headache, stiff neck, nausea, vomiting, rapid breathing or a rash. Hand washing and covering coughs and sneezes are also good practices to follow."

More information: The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has more about [bacterial meningitis](#).

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