



January 31, 2017

Dear Parent/Guardian:

Yesterday, leadership at Gettys Middle School notified our agency of a case of bacterial meningitis in a person affiliated with the school. Since that time, we have been working with school administration to provide recommendations on all necessary precautions. We have also been asked to offer to parents and families some additional information about bacterial meningitis in the hopes of answering any questions you may have and relieving some fears in what we understand is concerning news.

Meningitis is the swelling or inflammation of the tissue covering the spinal cord and brain. Meningitis can be caused by several types of bacteria or viruses. Preventive antibiotic treatment or vaccination is not recommended for those who have been in contact with the type of bacterial meningitis that has been reported in this case.

Bacterial meningitis may be spread by direct contact with an infected person's oral or respiratory secretions (saliva or mucus) or it may occur in people who are temporary "carriers" of certain bacteria. These individuals may become ill after they carry the bacteria in or on their bodies. Doctors do not know why, but carriers only rarely become sick. However, good hand washing helps stop the potential spread of bacteria and viruses and should always be practiced. Additionally, it is safe for your child to maintain his or her normal school schedule.

Symptoms of meningitis may include the sudden onset of fever, headache, and stiff neck (the person would have difficulty bending his or her neck to touch the chin to the chest). Other symptoms include sensitivity to light, confusion, drowsiness, nausea, vomiting or loss of appetite. If your child develops any of these symptoms, please take him/her to your health care provider immediately for evaluation.

Additional information about meningitis can be found at: <https://www.cdc.gov/meningitis/index.html>.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact the Upstate Region Public Health Epidemiology Office at 864-372-3133.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Matt Petrofes", is written over a light blue circular stamp.

Matt Petrofes, MBA
Health Director
Upstate Public Health Region