

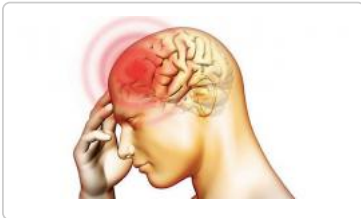
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LA County Dept. of Health Urges MSM and HIVers to Get Meningitis Vaccine

by Winnie McCroy
EDGE Editor
Wednesday Jul 27, 2016

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Yesterday, the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health expanded their recommendations for Southern California that men who have sex with men (MSM) and people with HIV get vaccinated for meningitis.

Towleroad [reports](#) that The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the California Department of Public Health are assisting local health departments with the investigation and management of an increase in cases. The local health departments have collectively agreed to expand the

recommendation to include all gay/MSM rather than only those in 'high risk' groups.

"We acknowledge this broadens our prior recommendations, but, after careful consultation with the CDC and Health Officers in other affected jurisdictions, we consider that this expansion of the vaccination recommendations is a necessary step to suppress this outbreak," said LA County Interim Health Officer, Jeffrey Gunzenhauser, MD, MPH.

Public Health clinics will provide free meningococcal vaccinations for all people at higher-risk, regardless of health insurance status. Vaccination can also be obtained from [providers](#) who serve the LGBT community. Vaccination prevents meningococcal disease which can be spread by saliva, utensils or toothbrushes, sharing cigarettes or other smoking implements.

The LA Times [reports](#) that there has been an increase above the typical number of reported cases for this time of year across southern California, with 13 cases in LA County, seven of these cases are gay/MSM. No deaths have occurred in LA County due to these infections.

"Meningococcal disease is a rare, but serious disease that can lead to swelling in the brain and spinal cord, loss of a limb, deafness, brain damage or even death. Meningococcal disease is caused by a type of bacteria known as *Neisseria meningitidis*," reported the Health Department. "The illness most people are familiar with is meningitis. It can be spread to others through the respiratory secretions of people who carry the bacteria without symptoms in their nose and throat. Meningococcal disease can start with flu-like symptoms, and progress to high fever, headache, stiff neck, confusion and rash. People who experience these symptoms should seek medical care immediately."

Winnie McCroy is the Women on the EDGE Editor, HIV/Health Editor, and Assistant Entertainment Editor for EDGE Media Network, handling all women's news, HIV health stories and theater reviews throughout the U.S. She has contributed to other publications, including The Village Voice, Gay City News, Chelsea Now and The Advocate, and lives in Brooklyn, New


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