



# COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE PUBLICATION  
March 11, 2008

**Contact:** Leslie Ridgeway (619) 685-2239  
**School Contact:** Howard Taras, M.D. (858) 627-7595 or (619) 543-6737

## **SAN DIEGO ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENT HAS MENINGITIS** *HHSA Working with School to Inform Parents*

The San Diego County Health and Human Services Agency (HHSA) has been notified that a student at Bethune Elementary School in San Diego has bacterial meningitis, also known as meningococcal disease.

“Bacterial meningitis is spread by close contact,” said Wilma Wooten, M.D. M.P.H., County Public Health Officer. “Oral secretions transferred by sharing food, drinks, water bottles, and lip balm, and other oral contact spreads this potentially serious disease and should be avoided.

“Although this child was too young to be vaccinated, parents should be aware that a vaccine to prevent bacterial meningitis is available for children at age 11 or 12, and is recommended for college students living in dorms,” Dr. Wooten added.

HHSA is working with school officials to identify children and others who had close contact with the ill child and recommend treatment as appropriate. The school has sent letters to all parents notifying them of signs and symptoms of the disease and recommended precautionary measures. The child’s last day at school was March 5. The child has been hospitalized and is improving.

Bacterial meningitis is an infection of the fluid of a person's spinal cord and the fluid that surrounds the brain. Bacterial meningitis can be quite severe and may result in brain damage, hearing loss, or learning disability. It can be treated with a number of effective antibiotics.

Symptoms are fever, headache, stiff neck and tiredness. Rash, sore throat and vomiting can also occur. The time between exposure to the disease and the onset of symptoms is usually 3-4 days. Children exhibiting any of these symptoms should be taken immediately to a healthcare provider or emergency room.

For information on bacterial meningitis and the vaccine, contact the HHSA Immunization Branch at (619) 692-8661 or visit the web site at [www.sdiz.org](http://www.sdiz.org).

###



COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO  
**NEWS RELEASE**

FOR IMMEDIATE PUBLICATION  
March 11, 2008

