

R(15)161277

## Meningococcal C Public Health Advisory

**YELLOWKNIFE (December 16, 2004):** Due to the meningococcal C outbreak primarily affecting British Columbia Lower Mainland's gay and bisexual communities, Chief Medical Health Officer Dr. André Corriveau advises that any Northwest Territories resident who feels he/she may be at risk for the disease should be vaccinated.

Gay and bisexual men who have traveled to the Vancouver region since October 2004, or are planning a trip there in the near future may be at increased risk of contracting this illness if they took part or are likely to engage in any of the following activities:

- Kissing on the lips;
- Sharing drinks or cigarettes;
- Sharing lipstick or lip balm; or
- Any other activities that could result in the sharing of saliva.

NWT residents who feel they are at increased risk may call Tele-Care NWT: 1-888-255-1010 to get advice from a nurse about whether they need the vaccine. Advice is available in over 100 languages, including NWT aboriginal languages. Nurses at Tele-Care NWT will recommend people who need the vaccine make an appointment at their local public health unit or health centre. The vaccine will be given on a confidential basis.

Public health officials in British Columbia have begun a vaccination program for male residents who have sex with other men. Travel to the province is safe; however, people who plan to travel to the region should be aware of the outbreak and avoid high-risk behaviours that involve sharing saliva.

No cases of meningococcal disease have been reported in the NWT recently, and there is no specific threat to NWT residents.

Meningococcal C bacteria can cause serious illness or even death. The bacteria can infect the lining of the brain and spinal cord (causing meningitis) or can infect other parts of the body (causing meningococemia.)

More information about meningococcal C bacteria is available at the Department's website: [www.hlthss.gov.nt.ca](http://www.hlthss.gov.nt.ca) (click on Publications, then Brochures & Fact Sheets, then scroll down to #12: Meningitis.)

More information about the targeted vaccination campaign in B.C. is available on the British Columbia Centre for Disease Control's website: [www.bccdc.org](http://www.bccdc.org).

**For more information, contact:**

Megan Holsapple  
Media Relations  
Department of Health and Social Services  
(867) 873-7066