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San Joaquin Public Health Services and Stockton Unified School District Health Services are investigating a possible case of bacterial meningitis that took the life of a fourth grader over the weekend. The SUSD community mourns her death and offers support to her family.

The student went home from her elementary school sick on Thursday, was treated first at a local hospital and then at Oakland Children's Hospital, where she died Sunday.

While Oakland Children's Hospital provided preventative treatment to the child's family and friends believed to have interacted with her, SUSD's Health Services is recommending that anyone who is concerned they may have been in direct contact with the child's oral secretions see their personal physician.

Public Health indicates that persons with casual classroom contact are not at risk for the disease. The disease is spread through close contact with oral secretions such as through kissing, sharing the same soda can or drinking glass, sharing the same eating utensils, etc. It is not spread through the air.

Meningitis is an infection and inflammation of the membranes and fluid surrounding the brain and spinal cord and is caused by bacteria or viruses. The bacterial form of the disease is the most serious. Early symptoms can be mistaken for the flu and include high fevers, skin rash, chills, headaches, stiff necks, vomiting and seizures.

SUSD nurses were at the school Monday determining whether students or staff may have been in close contact with the child. Treatment for anyone who had close direct interaction with her is a single dose of an antibiotic. SUSD Health Services sent a letter home with students at the child's school Monday informing them of the situation and preventative measures.

According to SUSD Health Services, over the past ten years there have been a few cases of this disease among students attending SUSD, no deaths and no second cases at any of the schools.

*For more information contact Dianne Barth, Communications Director, at 933-7025 or 479-5302.*