TO: CLUSTER GENERAL MANAGERS
DISTRICT DIRECTORS
CIRCUIT AND WARD MANAGERS
PRINCIPALS OF SCHOOLS
SGB CHAIRPERSONS

KZN CIRCULAR NO. 27 OF 2009

MENINGITIS INFORMATION

1. In response to media reports that some learners in Kwazulu - Natal have contracted meningitis, the Acting Head of Department: Health Dr Y.L Mbele has issued the following notice to the Department of Education.

"WHAT IS MENINGITIS
Meningitis is an infection of the layers of tissue which cover the brain and spinal cord. Meningitis is curable.

WHAT CAUSES MENINGITIS
Meningitis can be caused by different germs

- Viruses - normally a very mild form of the disease, and most patients will get better with no treatment - not reportable
- Fungal - a very common form of the disease, and is treatable – also not reportable
- Bacterial - Meningococcal meningitis (Neisseria), which is highly infectious, and can kill within a very short time this, is the form of the disease that has the potential for epidemics, and these cases are reportable for investigation and follow up.

HOW DOES IT SPREAD
Spread occurs through contact with fine droplets of discharge from the nose and mouth of the infected person.

EXAMPLES: kissing, sneezing, coughing, and sharing of used eating utensils, or sharing confined spaces (bed spaces, classrooms etc).

HOW TO AVOID SPREADING INFECTION
To avoid spreading this and other infections everyone must cover nose or mouth when sneezing or coughing, and wash hands frequently especially before preparing food, and after going to the toilet.

Avoid kissing sick people (especially babies) on the mouth, and don’t use used eating utensils. Also avoid overcrowding conditions.

HOW DO I KNOW IF I HAVE MENINGITIS
When you have the following
- SEVERE HEADACHE
- HIGH FEVER
- STIFF NECK
- Drowsiness or confusion
- Eyes sensitive to light
- Nausea or vomiting
- Fits
- Skin rash
WHAT TO DO
Immediately go to the nearest hospital or clinic for testing and treatment.

DO NOT DELAY
GO IMMEDIATELY
SEEK MEDICAL TREATMENT IMMEDIATELY

KWAZULU NATAL SITUATION

The disease is mildly endemic in Kwazulu-Natal, and we normally see about 35-40 cases a year. These are isolated cases, and are not outbreaks and we normally see an increase during the cold dry winter months, and early spring months, June to November.

There is currently no outbreaks in Kwazulu-Natal, and we have had 5 confirmed isolated cases reported and investigated, so far this year*

2. The Department of Health advises that there is currently no outbreak of meningitis in Kwazulu-Natal and advises that persons observing any of these symptoms (as described) must go for medical testing and treatment.

3. Managers and principals schools are requested to bring the contents of this notice to the attention of educators and parents

R.Cassius Lubisi PHD
Superintendent-General
26/03/2009