

**Alabama Department of Public Health
Alabama Emergency Response Technology (ALERT)
Health Alert Network (HAN) 10/02/2018**

Pneumococcal Disease in Barbour County

- **Beginning September 14, 2018, a cluster of severe pneumococcal disease was identified at Ventress Correctional Facility in Clayton, Alabama.**
- **Severe pneumococcal disease may present as pneumonia, sepsis, or meningitis.**
- **If you see a patient with symptoms such as fever, severe respiratory symptoms requiring medical attention or admission, headache, and/or stiff neck that could indicate bacterial pneumonia, sepsis, or bacterial meningitis who had contact with Ventress Correctional Facility or a person who is or has been incarcerated at Ventress since September 1, 2018, consider the diagnosis of severe pneumococcal disease and please contact APDH at 1-800-469-4599 (24/7/365).**

The Alabama Department of Public Health (ADPH) is investigating a cluster of severe pneumococcal disease at the Ventress Correctional Facility in Clayton, Alabama. Since September 14, 2018, among individuals incarcerated at Ventress Correctional Facility, there have been three confirmed cases with one resulting in death.

Severe pneumococcal disease can present as invasive pneumococcal disease (IPD)—usually meningitis, sepsis, or bacteremic pneumonia—or as nonbacteremic pneumonia or other respiratory infection. Noninvasive pneumococcal infections include middle ear infections, sinusitis, and bronchitis. Lastly, people can carry these bacteria in their nose and throat without being ill.

Although *S. pneumoniae* outbreaks are rare, they can occur in closed settings such as prisons, military barracks, and long-term care facilities. Certain medical conditions, such as asplenia, chronic heart disease, lung disease, liver disease, renal disease, cerebrospinal fluid leak, cochlear implant, other immunocompromising conditions, and smoking, increase the risk of severe pneumococcal infections. Transmission of *S. pneumoniae* occurs as a result of direct person-to-person contact with respiratory secretions. Close contact is defined as contact in which respiratory droplets or secretions from nose, mouth, or throat are exchanged. Prolonged contact such as that of living together in an institutional setting is also thought to increase the risk of transmission.

Identification of Additional Cases

Identification of any additional cases is important for understanding the scope of the outbreak and who may be at risk.

Case Definition: Person who has been incarcerated or who has had close or prolonged contact with a person incarcerated in the Ventress Correctional Facility since September 1, 2018 who has fever, severe

respiratory symptoms requiring medical attention or admission, headache, and/or stiff neck that could indicate bacterial pneumonia, sepsis, or bacterial meningitis.

Diagnostic Testing

Persons meeting the case definition should be evaluated for pneumococcal disease at the appropriate level of care. The following tests would be helpful to obtain:

- chest radiographs and *S. pneumoniae* urine antigen testing (UAT) when pneumonia is suspected
- blood cultures when pneumonia, sepsis, meningitis, or other invasive disease is suspected
- pleural fluid culture or PCR when empyema is suspected
- CSF cultures and/or pneumococcal antigen testing or PCR when meningitis is suspected

If a patient presents with influenza-like illness, a nasopharyngeal influenza specimen for testing should be collected and sent to the Bureau of Clinical Laboratories since initial cases have been reported in the Southeastern District this season.

Recommendations for Providers

- Maintain a high index of suspicion for severe pneumococcal disease among patients with fever, severe respiratory symptoms requiring medical attention or admission, headache, and/or stiff neck that could indicate bacterial pneumonia, sepsis, or bacterial meningitis and who have a connection with the Ventress Correctional Facility in Clayton, Alabama.
- Request radiographs, cultures, UAT, PCR, and antigen testing, and influenza testing for *S. pneumoniae* as indicated when pneumococcal infection is suspected.
- Report potential cases of severe pneumococcal disease to the ADPH at 1-800-469-4599 (24/7/365).

Distribution

This HAN has been distributed to counties where the majority of Ventress Correctional Facility personnel reside. These include Barbour, Dale, Houston, and Pike Counties.