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**Johnson County Department of Health and Environment  
confirms meningitis death**

JOHNSON COUNTY, KAN. (June 2, 2015) – The Johnson County Department of Health and Environment received confirmation today that a 19-year-old woman has died from bacterial meningitis caused by the bacterium *Streptococcus pneumoniae*, also known as pneumococcus. Pneumococcal meningitis is fairly rare (less than one case per 100,000 people each year) and is the most severe type of pneumococcal disease.

“We are saddened to hear the news that we have lost a young member of our community to such a rare illness,” says James Joerke, deputy director of the Johnson County Department of Health and Environment. “Most bacteria that cause meningitis are harmless to those who carry it. However, in a susceptible person, these bacteria can cause a wide range of diseases, from bronchitis to ear and sinus infections to life-threatening pneumonia, meningitis, and less frequently, bacteria in the blood.”

Meningitis is an infection of the fluid around the spinal cord and the fluid that surrounds the brain. Symptoms can range from high fever, headache, stiff neck, and sensitivity to light to more severe symptoms such as confusion or seizures.

The bacteria are not spread by casual contact or by simply breathing the air where a person with meningitis has been and is not as contagious as viruses that cause the common cold or flu.

Joerke said close contacts of a person with pneumococcal meningitis do not need preventative antibiotics and there is no public health threat to the community because the bacteria is not easily spread.

For more information about bacterial meningitis, visit

<http://www.cdc.gov/meningitis/bacterial.html> or

<http://www.cdc.gov/pneumococcal/about/index.html>

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**About Johnson County, Kansas**

Located in the southwestern quadrant of the Kansas City Metropolitan Region, Johnson County, Kansas is a community of choice with a current population of more than 560,000, making it the most populated of the 105 counties in Kansas, but traditionally having the lowest mill levy in the state. For more information visit the county's website at [www.jocogov.org](http://www.jocogov.org).