



ANDREW J SPANO
County Executive

Joshua Lipsman, M.D., M.P.H.
Commissioner, Department of Health

ATTENTION

Public Health Update

The Westchester County Department of Health provides public health updates to members of the medical community on important issues affecting public health in Westchester. These updates are available on the Physician's Corner of our website at www.westchestergov.com/health/physicianscor.htm

October 19, 2001
9:00 AM

ALERT: ANTHRAX UPDATE

1. The local police department should be called first for the evaluation of any suspicious package, powder, or other substance.
2. In the absence of known exposure to anthrax, the value of nasal swab testing to determine the need for post-exposure prophylaxis is not known. Therefore, the health department strongly discourages nasal swab testing of individuals without a known exposure to anthrax.
3. A CDC broadcast entitled "Anthrax: What Every Clinician Should Know" will be shown on Monday October 22, 2001 5:00 PM - 6:30 PM at New York Medical College, The Center for Interactive Learning, The Learning Center, Valhalla. Call 914-594-4531 for information.
4. Medical providers and/or individuals who were potentially exposed in the known anthrax situations in Washington, D.C. (Senator Daschle) and in the NYC Offices of Governor Pataki should call the following numbers to report the exposure and receive further information regarding testing and treatment.

Washington, D.C.	202-442-9196
NYC Governor's Offices	1-800-278-2965 (NYS Dept. of Health Line)

5. A third case of cutaneous anthrax has been diagnosed in New York City. The patient is a 27- year old adult who works at CBS Studios on West 57th Street. A subsequent fax will provide more information.

TO: Medical Directors, Emergency Department Directors, Infection Control Practitioners, Infectious Disease Physicians, Hospital CEOs, and Laboratory Directors:

Please Share this Alert with the Following Key Staff at Your Hospital:

- 1 – Hospital Administration
- 2 – All Medical and Nursing Staff
- 3 – Emergency Departments
- 4 - Hospital Safety Director
- 5 – Hospital Pharmacy and Laboratories

Presumptive Anthrax in Governor Pataki's NYC Office

The Westchester County Department of Health (WCDH) has been informed by the New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) that one environmental sample from the Governor's office on the 39th floor of 633 3rd Avenue has preliminarily tested positive for anthrax by PCR only. Definitive identification of anthrax requires testing requires a positive culture result. Culture results are pending. Other samples, including one from the ventilation system, have tested negative for anthrax by PCR. Therefore, there is no evidence that the ventilation system has been affected.

At this time, the New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH), after consultation with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, is recommending that full-time employees of the 39th floor of 633 3rd Avenue be given antibiotics as post-exposure prophylaxis for possible anthrax exposure until culture results of environmental tests are available. No nasal swabs are being done at this time. Antibiotics will be given until culture results of the environmental samples are known. Further antibiotic treatment recommendations will be given by the NYSDOH at that time.

Persons who work on the 39th floor and/or their physicians should call the NYSDOH at 1 (800) 278-2965 to report the exposure and receive updated recommendations.

Westchester County specific information can be obtained from the Westchester County Department of Health Bioterrorism Information Line :

914-813-5609

Sincerely,

Amy S. Rosenberg

Amy S. Rosenberg, M.D.
Director, TB & Communicable Diseases

Ada J. Huang

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