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*"Partnering to promote, protect and preserve health in our community."*

## HEALTH ALERT NETWORK HEALTH DISTRICT 4

### ADVISORY FOR HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS

Central District Health Department Asks Medical Providers to Watch for Unusual Skin Infection -- Four *Mycobacterium abscessus* Cases Identified

April 26, 2013

This week Central District Health Department was notified of four pediatric cases with *Mycobacterium abscessus* skin infections. This is a chronic skin infection that is under-diagnosed because special stains or cultures are necessary to diagnose cases. Investigation is in progress but so far all of the cases are female, 3 years of age, live in Boise or Meridian, and had onset dates ranging from January 2013 to March 2013. The cases have in common exposure to a local recreational facility's wading pool, but health department investigation has not confirmed the source of infection at this time. All patients presented with red bumps on their hands and/or feet. Some of the blister-like nodules either drained spontaneously or required drainage in clinic procedure.

**Please consider atypical mycobacteria if patients present with skin nodules, draining abscesses, or pus-filled vesicles.**

**Please note: This infection can be mistaken for Hand, Foot, and Mouth Disease.**

To identify additional cases, Central District Health requests providers and laboratorians test and report if they find the following:

1. Cases of cutaneous abscess, soft tissue infection, or skin nodules that cultured rapidly growing nontuberculous mycobacteria (including *M. abscessus/chelonae*) since November 2012
2. Abscesses on hands and feet that do not resolve with standard antibiotic treatment regardless of culture since November 2012. Please collect clinical specimens for testing when possible.
3. Report any new cases with red vesicles or cutaneous abscess and coordinate with your microbiology laboratory to forward any acid fast bacilli (*Mycobacterium* spp.) culture to the Idaho Bureau of Laboratories.

*Mycobacterium abscessus* is found naturally in water, soil, and dust. Rarely, these bacteria can cause skin infections. *M. abscessus* can be spread through contact with contaminated water or soil. Person-to-person spread is not common but anyone who

touches or cares for an infected site should wash their hands thoroughly with soap and water after contact. The incubation period is typically 3-4 weeks but can vary.

For treatment recommendations, physicians should consult with their infectious disease specialist. Laboratorians should forward acid fast bacteria positive cultures to Idaho Bureau of Laboratories for identification.

For additional information call the Office of Communicable Disease Control at 327-8625.

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