

Infection Control During Spinal Procedures a Must

Health care providers follow established infection-control recommendations during spinal procedures including the use of a mask and adherence to aseptic technique, says the Center for Disease Control and Prevention. This reminder appeared in the January 29 issue of *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*.

This notice was necessitated after two small clusters of bacterial meningitis following spinal anesthesia occurred recently, even though the Healthcare Infection Control Practices Advisory Committee issues related infection-control recommendations in 2007. The clusters involved three cases in New York and two in Ohio. All five female patients received intrapartum spinal anesthesia, and four of the five were confirmed to have *Streptococcus salivarius* meningitis, a bacterium that is part of the normal mouth flora. The occurrence of meningitis caused by normal mouth flora after spinal injection procedures performed by a common provider suggests a breach in aseptic technique.

The CDC report summarizes the investigations of these five cases, which determined that the New York cases were associated with one anesthesiologist and the Ohio cases were associated with a second anesthesiologist. In Ohio, the anesthesiologist did not wear a mask; wearing a mask might have prevented the infections. The findings underscore the need to follow established infection-control recommendations during spinal procedures. Please remember to use a mask and adhere to aseptic technique.