

## **Officials probe 2 possible meningitis deaths**

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TEXAS CITY — Galveston County health officials are investigating two deaths during the weekend that might be as a result of meningitis.

The first was a 1-year-old boy from Hitchcock who died at a Texas City hospital; the other a Texas City teen who died at a Houston hospital, health officials confirmed.

In the case of the Hitchcock boy, Galveston County medical examiner's investigator John Florence said the infant was brought into the emergency room of Mainland Medical Center on Friday night.

Galveston County Health District spokesman Kurt Koopmann said while the cause of death is under investigation, it was not confirmed as meningitis-related.

He said initial blood work performed on the boy indicated some form of bacteria in his system, but not meningitis.

Meanwhile, health officials were contacted Monday by Texas Children's Hospital in Houston of a probable case of meningitis-related death. That case involved a 15-year-old boy from west Texas City who attended La Marque Middle School.

While blood work had not confirmed the teen's death was because of meningitis, the hospital classified the case as "probable meningitis" because of the symptoms displayed by the teen, Koopmann said.

The Harris County Medical Examiner's Office on Monday confirmed Dandre Alexander, 15, of Texas City died at Texas Children's Hospital of "brain herniation secondary to meningitis."

La Marque school district spokeswoman Denise McLean said the school district's lead nurse, the middle school nurse and a student's doctor said a La Marque Middle School student died "Saturday morning due to cardiac arrest related from an unattended seizure."

It was unclear whether that death was related to the meningitis case the health district was informed of on Monday or whether it is an unrelated death. According to the Centers for Disease Control, meningitis can result in seizures.

McLean, who was ill and had lost her voice, did not respond to follow-up questions from The Daily News to confirm if the school district had or was planning to inform parents of the boy's death or if any health precautions had been put in place as a result. A call to Superintendent Ecomet Burley's mobile phone was also not returned Monday night.

Koopmann said while the cases are under investigation, the health district was not recommending any preventive medicines be taken by those who might have come in contact with either boy. Meningitis is spread through close, personal contact.

The health district spokesman did say anyone who might have been in the Mainland Medical Center Hospital on Friday night when the infant was brought in or with Alexander to be aware of meningitis symptoms.

Koopmann said if anyone develops the symptoms, they should seek medical help from their doctor.