

Meningococcal Invasive Disease Information Sheet

What is Meningococcal Invasive Disease?

Meningococcal invasive disease is a life-threatening illness caused by bacteria called *Neisseria meningitidis*. The most common form of the illness is meningitis (infection and inflammation of brain and spinal cord lining) but septicemia (infection of the blood) can also occur.

How can you catch Meningococcal Invasive Disease?

This bacteria is found in the noses and throats of about 1 out of every 10 people, usually without making them sick. The bacteria can be passed from person to person through contact with saliva and other fluids from the nose and mouth. Close contact and activities such as kissing, or sharing drinks, eating utensils, toothbrushes or cigarettes are some of the ways the bacteria can spread. Coughing and sneezing can also spread the infection.

What are the symptoms of Meningococcal Invasive Disease?

Symptoms of meningococcal meningitis include:

- High fever
- Headache
- Stiff Neck
- Confusion
- Sensitivity to light
- In newborns: irritability, poor feeding

Symptoms of meningococcal blood infection include:

- Fatigue
- Vomiting (Throwing up)
- Fever and Chills
- Muscle, joint, chest or stomach pain
- Dark purple rash

Symptoms progress rapidly and can cause death in only a few hours. For survivors, permanent problems may occur, such as brain and hearing damage, or tissue damage in limbs that may result in amputation.

How can you be treated for Meningococcal Invasive Disease?

Meningococcal infections can be treated with antibiotics prescribed by your doctor. Treatment should be started as soon as possible.

How can you prevent Meningococcal Invasive Disease?

The most effective way to protect you and your child against certain types of bacterial meningitis is to get vaccinated. The vaccine is usually given to children at 11-12 years of age, with a booster dose when they are 16 years old. The meningococcal vaccine is also recommended for certain groups of people who are at higher risk for getting this illness, such as college students, people with weakened immune systems or those who are travelling to a country where the disease is common.

People who are close contacts of someone with meningococcal invasive disease, especially people living in the same household, should speak with their medical provider about receiving antibiotics to prevent them from developing the disease.