

Meningococcal Disease

Frequently Asked Questions

What is meningococcal disease?

Meningococcal disease is an infection caused by a type of bacteria called *Neisseria meningitidis*. One out of every ten people carry this germ in their nose and throat without getting sick. However, this bacteria can cause meningitis, which is the swelling of the tissues covering the brain and spinal cord. It can also cause an infection in the blood.

How does meningococcal disease spread?

It can be spread through contact with aerosols or secretions from the nose, throat, or mouth of a person carrying the bacteria. Examples include kissing, sharing food/drinks, water bottles, utensils, cigarettes, lip gloss, living in the same household, or having close face-to-face contact.

Is my school or workplace safe?

The bacteria that causes meningococcal disease cannot survive for more than a few minutes outside the body. It cannot be spread by sharing equipment such as keyboards, mats, or touching shared surfaces such as doorknobs.

What are the symptoms of meningococcal disease?

Symptoms may include sudden onset of fever, headache, and stiff neck. Other symptoms may include nausea, vomiting, increased sensitivity to light, confusion, or a rash that does not change color when pressure is applied.

How is meningococcal disease treated?

People with meningococcal disease can be treated with specific antibiotics if identified early. Antibiotics must be prescribed by a doctor.



What can I do to protect myself?

If you think you recently had close contact with a person with meningococcal disease, talk to your doctor right away about possibly getting a specific antibiotic that can provide protection.

There is a vaccine available to prevent this infection. It is routinely recommended for adolescents 11-12 years of age, with a booster dose at age 16 years. It is also recommended for certain college students, laboratory workers and people with compromised immune systems.

For More Information

California Department of Public Health (CDPH)

<http://www.cdph.ca.gov/HealthInfo/discond/Pages/MeningococcalDisease.aspx>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

<http://www.cdc.gov/meningococcal/>



Key Points for Prevention

- ✓ Talk to your doctor about getting the meningococcal vaccine.
- ✓ Don't share things like cigarettes, food, drinks, water bottles, utensils or lip gloss.
- ✓ Wash your hands often with warm, soapy water for at least 20 seconds.
- ✓ Use your elbow or tissue to cover your nose and mouth when you cough or sneeze.
- ✓ Limit your contact with people who are ill.