



MENINGOCOCCAL, MENINGITIS, OR MENINGOCOCCEMIA

WHAT IS MENINGITIS?

Meningococcal disease is a very serious illness caused by bacteria. It can lead to brain damage, disability, and death. It usually causes two types of infections: swelling of the covering of the brain and spinal cord (meningitis) and blood infections (meningococemia).

There are five types (serogroups) of meningococcal bacteria that cause most disease worldwide: A, B, C, W, and Y. Serogroups B, C, and Y cause most of the illness seen in the United States. There are vaccines to protect against all five of these strains.

WHO CAN GET MENINGITIS?

Anyone who has been in close contact with someone who is sick with meningococcal disease should also seek treatment and begin antibiotics within 24 hours, even if they have been vaccinated before.

WHAT ARE SYMPTOMS OF MENINGITIS?

Meningitis is the most common form of meningococcal disease. Symptoms of meningitis include sudden onset of fever, headache, stiff neck, nausea, vomiting, sensitivity to light, and confusion.

Meningococcal septicemia (bloodstream infection) along with a **petechial rash** (pinpoint bruising) is the second most common type of meningococcal infection. Symptoms of septicemia include fever, fatigue, vomiting, severe aches or pain, rapid breathing, diarrhea, cold chills, petechial rash and in the later stages, a dark purple rash on the legs and arms.

If a person has symptoms of meningococcal disease, they usually appear anywhere from 3 to 4 days after exposure. Some people are carriers of meningococcal bacteria, but they have no symptoms of disease. Carriers can spread the disease to other people through direct contact with saliva.

Newborns and babies may not have the classic symptoms. Instead, babies may be slow or inactive, irritable, vomiting, or feed poorly. In young children, doctors may also look at the child's reflexes for signs of meningococcal disease, specifically meningitis.

HOW IS MENINGITIS SPREAD?

It requires close or lengthy contact to spread. It's spread to other people by respiratory droplets, saliva or spit, or direct contact, such as coughing, kissing, or sharing anything by mouth with an infected person, like straws, silverware, lip balm, or toothbrushes.

Although it is rare, people can get meningococcal disease more than once. A previous infection does not offer lifelong protection from future infections. The risk of reinfection is one of the reasons why the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that all preteens and teens get vaccinated against meningococcal disease.

If you are exposed to someone with meningococcal disease or get sick with it, go to the emergency room for treatment as soon as suspected. Minutes make a difference between life or death and severe complications.

HOW IS MENINGITIS DIAGNOSED?

Meningitis is diagnosed by medical history, physical exams, blood tests, and imaging.

HOW IS MENINGITIS TREATED?

Many antibiotics are effective for treating meningococcal disease. It is important that treatment starts as soon as possible. Antibiotics help reduce the risk of dying and are most effective when given immediately after symptoms begin.

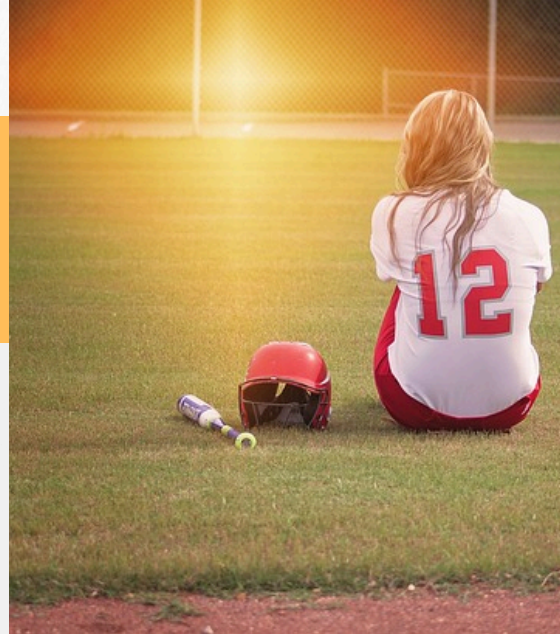
HOW CAN I HELP PREVENT MENINGITIS?

The best way to protect yourself against meningococcal disease is to get vaccinated before you are exposed. Two types of vaccines can protect against several kinds of meningococcal disease: meningococcal conjugate vaccine (protect against serogroups A, C, W, and Y) and meningococcal B vaccine (protect against serogroup B).

Meningococcal conjugate vaccine is a routine recommendation for all children aged 11 to 12 years, with a booster shot for teens at 16 years of age. Travelers to certain countries, and people aged 2 months and older who are at increased risk for meningococcal disease should also get the vaccine. People who are at increased risk for meningococcal disease should get revaccinated every 5 years with meningococcal conjugate vaccine as long as they remain at increased risk.

Meningococcal B vaccine may be given at 10 years of age and older to people with certain health conditions, are at increased risk because of a meningococcal B disease outbreak, or work with meningococcal bacterial in a lab. This vaccine is given in 2 or 3 doses.

Meningococcal disease is a Washington State reportable disease and must be reported to the local health department in Lewis County, contact Communicable Disease Surveillance and Response at 360-740-1223 during business hours or 360-740-1105 after hours and ask to speak with the health officer.



WHEN SHOULD I STAY HOME FROM WORK, SCHOOL, OR CHILDCARE?

YOU SHOULD NOT ATTEND WORK, SCHOOL, OR CHILDCARE IF ONE OF THE FOLLOWING APPLIES:

- You have sudden onset of meningitis symptoms.
- You do not feel well enough to participate in regular activities.