

"Meningococcal Invasive Disease"

**Q. What is meningococcal invasive disease?**

**A. Meningococcal (men-IN-jo-cah-call) invasive disease is a severe infection of the blood or the meninges (the covering of the brain and spinal cord). When the infection is in the blood, it is called meningococemia. When the infection is in the meninges, it is called meningococcal meningitis. Both of these infections are caused by a bacterium (germ) called *Neisseria meningitides*.**

**Q. How do people get meningococcal invasive disease?**

**A.** The bacteria (germs) are spread from person to person through saliva (spit) or other respiratory secretions. You must be in **close contact** with a sick person's secretions in order for the bacteria to spread.

Close contact includes activities such as:

- living in the same household
- kissing
- sharing eating utensils or food
- sharing drinks
- sharing cigarettes
- uncovered face-to-face sneezing or coughing

The bacteria are **NOT SPREAD** by casual contact activities like being in the same work or school room as the sick person, or handling books or other items that the sick person has touched. Likewise, being around a person who was in contact with the sick person does not put you at risk for catching meningococcal disease.

**Q. What are the symptoms of meningococcal invasive disease?**

**A.** Because early symptoms may be mild and similar to those of less serious viral illnesses like a common cold, it would not be unusual for people to delay seeking treatment.

The early symptoms of meningococcal disease include:

- Fever
- Headache
- Body aches
- Feeling very tired or sleepy

**Other symptoms that may occur are:**

- Stiff neck
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Confusion
- Sensitivity to light

Later in the illness, a rash appearing as purple blotches or spots on the arms, legs or torso may be seen.

**Q. What is the treatment for meningococcal invasive disease?**

**A.** Most people with meningococcal invasive disease are hospitalized and treated with antibiotics. Because the illness can impair body function, ventilator assistance, kidney dialysis or other supportive treatments may be needed. (NOTE: It is very important to finish your antibiotics even if you begin to feel better, unless otherwise directed by your health care provider.)

**Q. Who should get meningococcal vaccine?**

- A. Routine vaccination with MCV4 is recommended for all children entering 6<sup>th</sup> grade. It is also recommended for persons who are at increased risk for meningococcal disease. These include:
- Incoming college freshman or military recruits who will live in dormitories or barracks.
  - Anyone with an immune system disorder.
  - Anyone with a damaged spleen, or who spleen has been removed.
  - Certain groups of people during a meningococcal outbreak.

**Q. Where can I get more information on meningococcal invasive disease?**

- A. –Your health care provider  
-Your local health department  
-NJ Department of Health and Senior Services <http://www.nj.gov/health>  
-Centers for Disease Control & Prevention  
<http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dbmd/diseaseinfo/meningococcal>  
-Vaccine Information Statement:  
<http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/pubs/vis/downloads/vis-mening.pdf>