

Bacterial Meningitis Fact Sheet

What is Bacterial Meningitis?

It is an infection of the lining of the brain and spinal cord. Bacteria or viruses can cause meningitis. Bacterial meningitis is generally more severe. There are many different bacteria that can cause meningitis but the two most common are pneumococcal meningitis and meningococcal meningitis. Haemophilus influenza type B (Hib) related meningitis cases have come down over the past 20 years with introduction of the Hib vaccine, which is given to all children as part of routine immunizations.

What are the symptoms?

- Severe headache
- Stiff neck and back
- Nausea and vomiting
- High fever
- Confusion
- Bulging soft spot on baby's head

Symptoms may appear 3-4 days after exposure, and are sudden in onset. Some people can be infected with the bacteria and have no symptoms at all.

How is it treated?

A person will require hospitalization for IV antibiotics. Household members or other intimate contacts to the ill person may need treatment with a very short course of antibiotics to prevent disease.

How is it spread?

The bacteria that cause meningitis are spread by direct person-to-person contact with the nasal discharge or saliva of an infected person through kissing, drinking from a common container, or sharing eating utensils. They can also be spread through exposure to droplets when an infected person coughs or sneezes. People in the same household or daycare center, or anyone with direct contact with an infected person's oral secretions are at increased risk of becoming infected.

How can it be prevented?

- Always wash your hands after touching nasal secretions or saliva.
- If you (or your child) have signs or symptoms, or if you think you have been exposed, call or see your doctor or go to the emergency room immediately for evaluation.
- There are different vaccines for meningitis, please contact your doctor for the one your son or daughter qualifies for.

This fact sheet is for information only and is not meant to be used for self-diagnosis or as a substitute for consultation with a health care provider. For more information, call your health care provider or call the Bay County Health Dept at (989) 895-4003.

Visit our website at <http://www.baycounty-mi.gov/Health/> or the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention at www.cdc.gov