

Meningococcal Disease

1. What is meningococcal disease?

Meningitis is caused by many kinds of germs. Meningococcal disease is caused by a bacteria (germ) called *Neisseria meningitidis*. This germ can be found in the upper respiratory tract (the body parts that help you breathe, like the nose, throat, and lungs). One out of every ten people will carry this bacteria in their nose, throat, and lungs without getting sick.

2. How does meningococcal disease spread?

The germ can spread from one person to another when there's direct contact with saliva (spit), mucus, or air droplets that come out while coughing or sneezing. Close contact (like kissing), living in the same household, or sharing utensils (forks and knives), food, or drinks, can also spread germs.

3. What are the signs of meningococcal disease?

If you have some of these symptoms, get medical attention right away.

- High fever
- Bad headache
- Stiff neck
- Nausea and vomiting
- Confusion
- Low blood pressure
- Rash
- Muscle pain all over the body

4. How is meningococcal disease treated?

This kind of meningitis can be cured if treated early with antibiotics (medicine that kills bacteria). Antibiotics need to be prescribed by a doctor. The doctor will explain how to take antibiotics correctly.

5. How can you prevent the spread of meningococcal disease?

- Don't share utensils, food, drinks, lip balm, or cigarettes.
- Wash your hands often with warm, soapy water for at least 20 seconds.
- Use your elbow or a tissue to cover your nose and mouth when you cough or sneeze.
- Limit contact with people who are sick.
- Talk to your doctor about vaccination if you think you have a higher chance of getting sick. If you've had recent close contact with a person that's just had this kind of meningitis, contact your doctor right away to get preventative medication.
- Vaccination is recommended for college students who live in dorms, workers in medical labs, people that are less able to fight off disease, and children and teens ages 11-12 with a second vaccine at 16 years old.



Key Points

- Meningococcal disease is caused by bacteria and can be cured with antibiotics.
- Don't share utensils, food, or other items that may spread germs through saliva.
- Keep up healthy habits like not smoking and staying away from people who are sick.
- Talk to your doctor to see if vaccination is right for you.

For more information:

Los Angeles County,
Department of Public Health
<http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/acd/>

California Department of
Public Health
www.cdph.ca.gov/healthinfo

Centers for Disease Control and
Prevention (CDC)
www.cdc.gov/diseasesconditions

04/19/2013