

Meningococcal Disease

FACT SHEET

What is Meningococcal Disease?

Meningococcal disease is a bacterial infection that is spread by direct contact with secretions from the nose and mouth. The infection can be in the blood (meningococemia) or in the lining of the brain and spinal cord (meningitis).

Who Can Get Meningococcal Disease

Anyone can get meningococcal disease. It is spread by direct contact with secretions from the nose and mouth through activities such as kissing, sharing food, drinks, water bottles, toothbrushes, eating utensils or cigarettes.

What are the Symptoms?

Symptoms include:

- Fever
- Headache
- A change in the level of alertness
- Stiff neck
- Small, purplish rash may develop on the upper body
- Nausea
- Vomiting

What is the Treatment?

Meningococcal disease can be treated with antibiotics. Early diagnosis and treatment are important. If symptoms occur, contact your family doctor or visit the nearest emergency department to you immediately.

How Can You Prevent Meningococcal Disease?

- Reduce direct contact and exposure to discharges from nose and mouth (e.g. coughing, kissing, sharing utensils, drinking glasses, cigarettes, etc.)
- Reduce overcrowding in living quarters and workplaces (e.g. barracks, dormitories, sleep away camps, ships, etc.)
- Immunize following the Nova Scotia Immunization Schedule
- Consult a travel health clinic if travelling to countries where meningococcal disease is endemic
- Follow hand hygiene practices using plain or antimicrobial soap with running water or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer