



## **MENINGOCOCCAL DISEASE FACT SHEET**

### **What is meningococcal disease?**

Meningococcal disease is a severe bacterial infection of the bloodstream or meninges (the tissues covering the brain and spinal cord). Most cases occur during the winter and spring. Clusters of cases or outbreaks are very rare in the United States.

### **How can you be exposed to meningococcal disease?**

Anyone can develop meningococcal disease, but it is most common in infants, children and young adults. The bacteria can spread by direct close contact with nose or throat fluid of an infected person. Many people carry this germ in their nose and throat without any signs of being sick, while others may develop serious symptoms.

### **What are the symptoms of meningococcal disease?**

Most people who are exposed do not become very sick. However, some may develop serious illness with symptoms of fever, intense headache, stiff neck, nausea, vomiting and often times a purple rash. Confusion, sleepiness and difficulty waking can also occur. In infants, the only symptoms may be irritability, tiredness and poor feeding.

### **How soon after exposure do symptoms appear?**

Symptoms will usually appear within 2 to 10 days with 3 to 4 days being the most common.

### **What is the treatment for meningococcal disease?**

People diagnosed with meningococcal disease are treated with antibiotics.

### **Should people who have been exposed to meningococcal disease be treated?**

Only people who have been in close contact (household members, intimate contacts, health care personnel performing mouth-to-mouth resuscitation, daycare center playmates, etc.) may need to receive preventive treatment. Casual contact in a regular classroom, office or factory setting is not usually enough to cause concern. People needing treatment are usually advised to obtain a prescription for antibiotics from their doctor. If an exposed person does not have a doctor, local health departments may provide this medication.

**Is there a vaccine to prevent meningococcal disease?**

There is a vaccine for protection against meningococcal disease for adolescents and adults aged 11-55 years. The vaccine will protect against four of five most common strains of the bacteria.

**Where can I get more information?**

[www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)

[www.dshs.state.tx.us](http://www.dshs.state.tx.us)

**Source of Information**

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)