

Meningococcal Disease

What is meningococcal disease?

- Meningococcal disease is any illness caused by the bacteria *Neisseria meningitidis*.
- It is the leading cause of bacterial meningitis in children 2-18 years of age in U.S.
- Meningococcal disease can be very serious, even life-threatening in 48 hours or less.
- The two most severe and common illnesses caused by meningococcal bacteria include;
 - Meningitis - an infection of the fluid and lining around the brain and spinal cord
 - Septicemia - a bloodstream infection

What are the symptoms?

- Symptoms of meningococcal disease are similar to influenza (flu) and may include:
 - Sudden onset of a high fever
 - Headache
 - Stiff neck
 - Nausea
 - Vomiting
 - Increased sensitivity to light
 - Rash
 - Confusion
 - Severe aches and pain in the muscles, joints, chest or belly

How does meningococcal disease spread?

- Meningococcal disease is spread person to person by sharing respiratory secretions, through kissing or coughing, close or lengthy contact, and among people who share a room or live in the same household.
- Anyone can get meningococcal disease, but teens and college freshmen who live in residence halls are at increased risk.
- Some people can “carry” meningococcal bacteria in their nose and throat without getting meningococcal disease, but can still infect other people.
- Most cases of meningococcal disease are spread by people who “carry” the bacteria with no symptoms, appear to be random, and not linked to other cases.
- Meningococcal outbreaks can occur in communities, schools, colleges, prisons, and in other high risk populations.

Where can I find more information?

- Ask your doctor, or your local county health department
- Email the Alabama Department of Public Health, Immunization Division, at immunization@adph.state.al.us.
- Go to cdc.gov and type 'meningococcal disease' in the SEARCH box.



Alabama Department of Public Health

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1-800-469-4599 www.adph.org/imm 2/29/16