

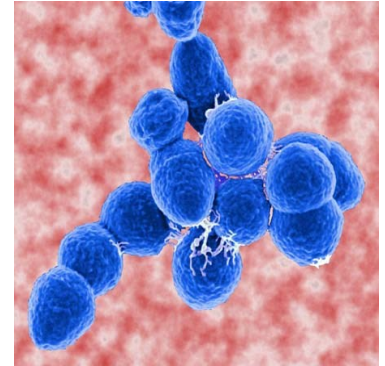


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Bacterial Meningitis

What is Meningitis?

Meningitis is a disease caused by the inflammation of the protective membranes covering the brain and spinal cord, known as the meninges. The inflammation is usually caused by an infection of the fluid surrounding the brain and spinal cord. Meningitis may develop in response to a number of causes, usually bacteria or viruses, but meningitis can also be caused by physical injury, cancer or certain drugs.



Island Health: Infection Prevention & Control (IPAC)

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Did You Know..... Bacterial meningitis can be fatal in rates as high as 1 in 10 cases.

Risk Factors

- Age: Infants are at higher risk than other age group
- Community Setting: Any setting where many people gather (such as large family homes, and schools)
- Travel: Especially to the Sub-Saharan Africa region
- Certain medical conditions and medications that weaken the immune system

Clinical Features

- Meningitis may cause an individual to have a sudden onset of fever, headache, rash, and stiff neck.
- Other signs and symptoms are nausea, vomiting, increased sensitivity to light (photophobia), and confusion.
- Typically the clinical features of bacterial meningitis will appear 3-7 days after exposure.
- Later symptoms of bacterial meningitis if left untreated can be severe. While most people with meningitis recover, it can cause serious complications, such as brain damage, hearing loss, seizure, coma, or learning disabilities.

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Transmission

- The germs that cause bacterial meningitis can be contagious.
- Fortunately, most of the bacteria that cause meningitis are not as contagious as diseases like the common cold or the flu.
- Bacterial meningitis is spread when an individual comes into direct contact with fluid of the nose or throat of an infected person.
- May be spread when people kiss, share food, drinks, baby bottles, soothers, lipstick, water bottles, or anything else that may have been in the mouth of someone with bacterial meningitis.

Diagnosis

- If meningitis is suspected, samples of blood or cerebrospinal fluid (near the spinal cord) are collected and sent to the laboratory for testing.
- If bacteria are present, they can often be grown (cultured). Growing the bacteria in the laboratory is important for confirming the presence of bacteria, identifying the specific type of bacteria that is causing the infection, and deciding which antibiotic will work best.

Common Causes of Bacterial Meningitis:

Newborns: Group B *Streptococcus*, *Escherichia coli*, *Listeria monocytogenes*

Infants and Children: *Streptococcus pneumoniae*, *Neisseria meningitidis*, *Haemophilus influenzae* type b

Adolescents and Young Adults: *Neisseria meningitidis*, *Streptococcus pneumoniae*

Older Adults: *Streptococcus pneumoniae*, *Neisseria meningitidis*, *Listeria monocytogenes*

Infection Prevention & Control

The most effective way to protect you and your child against certain types of bacterial meningitis is to complete the recommended vaccine schedule.

It is helpful to maintain healthy habits, such as not smoking and avoiding cigarette smoke, getting plenty of rest, and not coming into close contact with people who are sick. This is especially important for young infants, the elderly, or for those with a weakened immune system, since they are at increased risk for developing severe disease.

Individuals with suspected or diagnosed bacterial meningitis should be on droplet precautions if in the hospital. Visitors and healthcare providers entering the patients room should wear a gown, gloves, and mask with a face shield.

Treatment

Bacterial meningitis can be treated effectively with antibiotics and it is important that treatment be started as soon as possible.

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