



PUBLIC FACT SHEET

MENINGOCOCCUS

What is Meningococcus?

Meningococcus is a group of bacteria that live in the nose and throat and can occasionally enter the bloodstream, spinal cord and brain and cause severe disease.

How is Meningococcus spread?

Meningococcus may be spread person to person by contact with respiratory fluids:

- Coughing and/or sneezing
- Sharing things that are put in the mouth or nose
- Kissing

Meningococcus could also be used as a weapon of bioterrorism by making the bacteria airborne.

What are possible symptoms?

Symptoms may include:

- Intense headache
- Sensitivity to light
- Nausea and/or vomiting
- Stiff neck
- Fever, chills
- Rash

How is Meningococcus diagnosed?

Meningococcus is diagnosed with a laboratory test of blood and/or spinal fluid.

What is the treatment for Meningococcus?

Treatment for meningococcus needs to begin as soon as possible after symptoms start. Meningococcal infection is treated with antibiotics.

How can Meningococcus be prevented?

Meningococcus can be prevented by:

- Covering your mouth/nose when coughing or sneezing
- Washing your hands
- Not sharing things that are put in the mouth (cups, forks/spoons, etc.)
- Seeking medical advice when exposed to someone with Meningococcus
- Receiving the Meningococcal vaccine (MCV4) before being exposed to the bacteria. This vaccine is recommended by the Centers of Disease Control as part of the childhood vaccination schedule. In addition, all travelers to areas of the world with a high rate of meningococcus should be vaccinated.

For more information on Meningococcus:

Ottawa County Health Department

www.miOttawa.org

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:

www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dbmd/diseaseinfo/meningococcal_g.htm

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