

# Invasive Meningococcal Disease General

## What is invasive meningococcal disease?

Invasive meningococcal disease is a very rare but serious bacterial infection caused by the bacterium *Neisseria meningitidis*. There are different strains of this bacteria, including A, B, C, W, and Y. While some people carry this bacterium in their throat or nose without getting sick, the bacteria can invade other parts of the body and cause serious illness like meningitis, an inflammation of the lining of the brain and spinal cord (meninges) or septicemia/meningococemia, an infection in the bloodstream.

## Who can get invasive meningococcal disease?

Although rare, anyone can get invasive 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, cigarettes, eating utensils or musical instruments with a mouthpiece. Invasive meningococcal disease is not spread by talking to, being in the same room or by breathing the air in a room where the diagnosed person has been.

## What are the symptoms?

Symptoms may include:

- fever
- headache
- stiff neck
- change in the level of alertness (e.g., confusion)
- eyes being more sensitive to light
- nausea
- vomiting
- skin rash that spreads rapidly and begins as reddish or purplish spots that do not disappear when pressed

## What is the treatment?

Invasive meningococcal disease can be treated with antibiotics. Early diagnosis and treatment are important. If symptoms occur, contact your health care provider or visit the nearest emergency department to you immediately.

## How can invasive meningococcal disease be prevented?

- Stay up to date with vaccination following [Nova Scotia's Routine Immunization Schedule](#)
  - Meningococcal C vaccine is provided at 12 months of age and Meningococcal ACYW vaccine is provided in Grade 7.
  - Meningococcal B vaccine is provided to eligible youth up to 25 years old.
  - Certain individuals with [high-risk conditions](#) may be eligible for additional doses of meningococcal vaccines. To learn more, speak with a primary care provider or your specialized care team.
- Maintain healthy habits and reduce contact with secretions from other people's nose and mouth (e.g. coughing, kissing, sharing utensils, cigarettes/e-cigarettes, drinking glasses, etc.)
- Follow hand hygiene practices using soap with running water, or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Reduce overcrowding in living quarters and workplaces (e.g. barracks, dormitories,

overnight camps, ships, etc.)

- Talk to your health care provider or a travel health clinic a few months before traveling to countries where invasive meningococcal disease is common.

## **What if you have been in close contact with a person who has had invasive meningococcal disease?**

Close contacts of individuals diagnosed with invasive meningococcal disease are at a higher risk of developing the disease themselves compared to the general population. If you have been identified by Public Health as a close contact, antibiotics and immunization may be recommended to you to reduce the risk of developing disease and/or spreading to others. Be sure to follow Public Health's advice and monitor for symptoms. If symptoms develop seek care immediately at your local emergency department or call 911. Notify all health care providers of your recent exposure to invasive meningococcal disease.