

# Fact Sheet

## Invasive Meningococcal Disease (IMD)

### What is Invasive Meningococcal Disease (IMD)?

IMD is a bacteria that can cause two severe, and possibly life threatening illnesses:

- An infection of the lining of the brain and spinal cord referred to as meningitis; or
- a serious blood infection referred to as bacteraemia.

### How is it spread?

IMD is spread through contact with the saliva (spit) or respiratory secretions of an infected person. Close contact, such as kissing, sharing eating/drinking utensils or cigarettes increases the chances of spreading the infection.

### Who is at risk?

Anyone can get meningococcal disease, however most people who come in contact with the bacteria do not become sick.

Some individuals who are close contacts (example; family members) of a case may require antibiotics. Casual contacts such as those in the workplace or school are not at increased risk for infection. The community health care provider will work with the case to identify and contact those people at increased risk.

### What are the symptoms of IMD?

Symptoms usually occur quickly and may include fever, headache, stiff neck, nausea, vomiting and/or a small, purplish rash that is flat and smooth. People with this disease are obviously sick and may appear confused, irritable or drowsy.

### What is the treatment?

Antibiotics can be used to treat meningococcal disease; early diagnosis and treatment is important.

### How can IMD be prevented?

- Speak to your health care provider about eligibility for meningococcal vaccine.
- Frequent hand washing with soap is the best way to prevent all types of infection and the prevention of spreading germs. People should always wash their hands after coughing and sneezing, and before and after caring for anyone that is sick. .
- Avoid sharing any food, drinks, cigarettes, eating utensils, and toothbrushes.
- Reduce overcrowding in living quarters and workplaces.
- Speak to your health care provider if you are planning to travel to a developing country. The health care provider can let you know if you will be at increased risk for meningococcal disease. Travel vaccines are available for people who visit parts of the world where there is an increased risk of getting meningococcal disease.