



# Bacterial Meningitis



## What is Bacterial Meningitis?

Meningitis is an infection of the fluid surrounding the brain and spinal cord and is usually caused by a virus or bacteria. Bacterial meningitis is generally more severe than viral meningitis and usually requires hospitalization. Therefore, early diagnosis and treatment is important. Several types of bacteria can cause meningitis. Leading causes in the United States include:

- *Streptococcus pneumonia*
- Group B *Streptococcus*
- *Neisseria meningitidis*
- *Haemophilus influenzae*
- *Listeria monocytogenes*
- *Escherichia coli*

## How is Bacterial Meningitis spread?

It is spread through the respiratory droplets of an infected person when they cough or sneeze. It can also be spread by direct contact with nose or throat secretions of an infected person by kissing, sharing drinking glasses, water bottles, or eating utensils. The bacteria typically starts as an infection in the nose or throat and then travels through the bloodstream crossing the blood brain barrier.

## How is Bacterial Meningitis treated?

Bacterial Meningitis generally requires hospitalization and is treated with antibiotics.

**It is important to start treatment as soon as possible.** Sometimes, household members or very close contacts of the infected person are also treated with antibiotics to prevent the development of the disease.

## How can Bacterial Meningitis be prevented?

Avoid direct contact with the respiratory secretions of an infected person. Hand washing is important, especially after touching any oral or nasal secretions. If you have been directly

exposed to someone who has been diagnosed with bacterial meningitis, consult with your doctor immediately.

Vaccines are the most effective way to protect against certain types of bacterial meningitis;

- Meningococcal vaccines help protect against *N. meningitidis*
- Pneumococcal vaccines help protect against *S. pneumonia*
- *Haemophilus influenzae* serotype b (Hib) vaccines help protect against Hib

Prevention is especially important for people at increased risk for disease, including:

- Young babies
- Older adults
- People with weak immune systems
- People without a spleen or a spleen that doesn't work the way it should

## Symptoms of Bacterial Meningitis:

- Sudden onset of symptoms
- Symptoms develop in hours or 1-2 days
- Fever
- Rash
- Headache
- Stiff neck and back
- Nausea/vomiting
- Sensitivity to bright light
- Confusion
- Difficulty breathing
- Shock

Jackson County Health Department  
Communicable Disease Dept.  
1715 Lansing Ave.  
Jackson, MI 49202  
(517) 788-4655

[www.mijackson.org](http://www.mijackson.org)

Source: [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)

CDC Public Information

800-232-4636 (800-CDC-INFO)

TTY 888-232-6348

