



# 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. A variety of bacteria can cause bacterial meningitis. Today, *Streptococcus pneumoniae* and *Neisseria meningitidis* are the leading causes of bacterial meningitis.

## 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.

## How is Bacterial Meningitis treated?

Bacterial Meningitis generally requires hospitalization and is treated with antibiotics. 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.

Several vaccines are available to prevent bacterial meningitis. A routine childhood vaccine (Hib) has reduced the incidence of *Haemophilus meningitis* by 99%. Pneumococcal vaccine (Pneumovax) is recommended for infants and children to prevent Pneumococcal meningitis.

Meningococcal vaccine is recommended for all children and teens ages 11-18 and for people at increased risk for the disease. Vaccine may also be recommended for the control of outbreaks.

## 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

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