



Fact Sheet

South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control • www.scdhec.gov

Bacterial Meningitis

<p>What is Bacterial Meningitis?</p>	<p>Meningitis is an infection of the fluid around spinal cord and brain. It is sometimes called Spinal Meningitis. It can be caused by either a virus or a bacteria. Meningitis caused by a virus is less severe than the one caused by bacteria.</p> <p>There are three (3) types of bacteria (germs) that cause the disease: H. Influenzae (Hib), Strep pneumoniae, and Neisseria meningitis.</p> <p>The Strep pneumoniae germ is the same one that causes most cases of ear infections and pneumonia. This is a very common bacteria and can be found in up to 70% of all adults, most who experience no symptoms.</p>
<p>What are the symptoms?</p>	<p>The most common symptoms include a high fever, headache and a stiff neck. Other symptoms might be nausea, vomiting, confusion and being sleepy. People with these symptoms should see their doctor.</p>
<p>How is Bacterial Meningitis treated?</p>	<p>It can be treated with antibiotics. It is very important that the disease be diagnosed early and treated as soon as possible. This disease can cause death in about 15% of all people who are infected, so anyone who has any of these symptoms should see a doctor as soon as possible.</p>
<p>How do people catch this disease?</p>	<p>The Strep pneumoniae germ is very common. It is usually spread through close, personal or prolonged contact with respiratory or oral secretions. Unlike a cold or the flu, the bacteria that cause meningitis cannot be spread by casual contact or by breathing the air where a infected person has been.</p>
<p>What can be done to prevent this disease?</p>	<p>There is a very effective vaccine for the Hib bacteria that all children are required to have before attending school.</p> <p>There are two (2) vaccines that can be used to prevent Strep pneumonia, one for children from 2 months to 2 years of age and another for those over age 65 and some other high risk people.</p> <p>There is a vaccine available for N. Meningitis that is an optional vaccine sometimes recommended for college students living in close dormitory rooms. Close contacts of someone who is infected with N. Meningitis are often treated with antibiotics to prevent the disease.</p>
<p>Is the public at risk?</p>	<p>There is no increased risk to the general public. Even close personal contacts (household, personal care workers) are at only minimal increased risk.</p>