



# Fact Sheet

South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control • [www.scdhec.gov](http://www.scdhec.gov)

## *Neisseria meningitidis*

<p><b>What is <i>Neisseria Meningitis</i>?</b></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 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: <i>H. Influenzae</i> (HIB Type B), <i>Strep pneumoniae</i>, and <i>Neisseria meningitidis</i>.</p> <p>The <i>Neisseria meningitidis</i> bacteria, which causes meningococcal meningitis, accounts for about 30% of all bacterial meningitis cases in the United States. The disease most often occurs in children under 5 years of age. The largest number of cases is reported among 3-5 month old infants.</p>
<p><b>What are the symptoms?</b></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>Symptoms usually begin about four days after being infected, although that can range from 1 day to 10 days.</p>
<p><b>How is <i>Neisseria Meningitis</i> treated?</b></p>	<p>It can be treated with antibiotics. It is very important that the disease be diagnosed early and treated as soon as possible.</p>
<p><b>How do people catch this disease?</b></p>	<p>The <i>Neisseria meningitidis</i> germ 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 an infected person has been.</p>
<p><b>What can be done to prevent this disease?</b></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><b>Is the public at risk?</b></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>