

## Health Services Information Sheet

### What is meningococcal meningitis?

Meningococcal Meningitis is an infection that is spread by direct contact with secretions from the nose and mouth of an infected person. The infection can be in the blood (meningococemia) or in the lining of the brain and spinal cord (meningitis)

### Who Can Get Bacterial Meningitis?

Anyone can get bacterial meningitis. It is spread by direct contact with secretions from the nose and mouth through activities such as kissing, sharing food, drinks, water bottles, toothbrushes, eating utensils or cigarettes.

### What are the Symptoms?

Symptoms may include:

- fever
- headache
- change in the level of alertness and/or altered mental state
- stiff neck
- rash (that spreads rapidly and begins as reddish/purplish spots that don't disappear when pressed)
- nausea
- vomiting
- increased sensitivity to light



Health Services -Dairy Building  
Monday – Friday / 830-430pm

Anyone with these symptoms should seek prompt medical attention.

### What should I do if I think I have symptoms?

Anyone with severe symptoms should go to an emergency department or call 911. If unsure, call 811 for advice in Nova Scotia or similar service in other provinces.

If you require further information, or if you are concerned that you may have been directly exposed, please contact Public Health at 1-844-468-6805 (toll-free in North America).

### What is the Treatment?

Bacterial meningitis can be treated with antibiotics. Early diagnosis and treatment are important. If symptoms occur, contact your family doctor or visit the nearest emergency department to you immediately.



### How Can Bacterial Meningitis be Prevented?

- Individuals should reduce direct contact and exposure to discharges from the nose and mouth.
- Do not share eating utensils, drinking glasses, water bottles, tooth brushes, or any other object that transfers saliva or mucus.
- Follow hand washing and hygiene practices by using plain or antimicrobial soap with running water or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Limit exposure to overcrowded spaces
- Immunize following the [Nova Scotia Immunization Schedule](#)



### How do I know if I was immunized against meningitis?

You can check with your family doctor or Public Health who would have immunization records. Nova Scotia began immunizing 12-month-olds and Grade 4 children against meningitis C in 2005, then switched ( from Grade 4) to Grade 7 in 2007. This fall, we are switching to the quadravalent vaccine which includes strains A, C, Y and W. The vaccine is free for Nova Scotians through the childhood and school vaccination programs (ie, babies at 12 months and Grade 7 students).

If you are from another province, you can check their public health website for recommended immunization schedules.

### What If I Have Contact With Someone Who Has Been Diagnosed With Bacterial Meningitis?

Only those who have had **close contact** with someone diagnosed with bacterial meningitis needs further assessment. A close contact may be defined as:

- Household contact with the patient
- Someone who shares a sleeping arrangements with the patient
- People who have direct contamination of their nose or mouth with the oral/nasal secretions of the patient (i.e. kissing on the mouth, shared cigarettes, shared drinking bottles, etc.)
- Health care workers (HCWs) who have had intensive unprotected contact (without wearing a mask) with the patient (i.e. intubating, resuscitating or closely examining the oropharynx)

Bacterial meningitis is not spread by sitting next to someone, talking with someone, being in the same room with someone who has the illness or by simply breathing the air in a room where the person has been.