

WATCH OUT FOR MENINGOCOCCAL DISEASE

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What is meningococcal disease?

Meningococcal disease is caused by a bacteria called *Neisseria meningitidis*. This can result in swelling of the lining around the brain and spinal cord (meningitis) or blood poisoning (septicaemia). Meningococcal disease is serious and can kill within hours.

How does it spread?

The bacteria spread from person to person through fluid from the nose or mouth (e.g. by kissing, sneezing, coughing or sharing of used eating utensils). People get the disease when the bacteria move from the nose and throat to invade the body.

Who is at risk?

People of all ages can get meningococcal disease; however, it is more common in children under the age of 5 years. Usually we have to be in very close or regular contact with someone for the bacteria to pass between us.

What symptoms should I watch out for?

For younger children symptoms and signs may include:

- Fever;
- Vomiting;
- Persistent crying, poor eating, irritable and/or very sleepy;
- Convulsions or fits;
- Tense or bulging fontanel (soft spot on the baby's head);
- General body rash or bruises; and/or
- Breathing fast or difficulty breathing.

For older children and adults symptoms and signs may include:

- Fever;
- Severe headache;
- Stiff neck;
- Drowsiness or confusion;
- Eyes sensitive to light;
- Nausea or vomiting;
- Fits or convulsions; and/or
- Generalised body rash or bruises.

Symptoms can appear in any order and not everybody gets all these symptoms.

What should I do?

Immediately go to the nearest hospital or clinic for treatment! Very close contacts may also need treatment to prevent disease.

DO NOT DELAY! MENINGOCOCCAL DISEASE IS A MEDICAL EMERGENCY!!

SKIN RASH

