

Frequently Asked Questions

What is meningococcal invasive disease?

Meningococcal (muh-nin-jo-cok-ul) disease is a serious illness caused by a type of bacteria (germs) called *Neisseria meningitidis*. The disease may result in inflammation of the lining of the brain and spinal cord (meningococcal meningitis) and/or a serious blood infection (meningococcal septicemia). Meningococcal disease can become deadly in 48 hours or less. Even with treatment, 10-15% of people die. Others have long-term complications such as brain damage, learning problems, skin scarring, hearing loss, and loss of arms and/or legs.

Who gets meningococcal invasive disease?

Although it can occur in people of all ages, infants, preteens, teens, and young adults have the highest rates of meningococcal invasive disease in the United States. College students and military recruits are also slightly more at risk for the disease because of time spent in crowded living conditions like dorms or barracks. People with certain medical conditions or immune system disorders including a damaged or removed spleen are also at higher risk.

How do people get meningococcal invasive disease?

The bacteria are spread from person-to-person through the exchange of saliva (spit), coughs, and sneezes. You must be in direct (close) or lengthy contact with an infected person's secretions to be exposed. Examples of close contact include:

- Kissing
- Sharing items that come in contact with the mouth (water bottles, eating utensils, cigarettes and smoking materials, cosmetics (lip balm))
- Living in the same house
- Sleeping in the same residence (sleep overs)

About 1 out of 10 people carry meningococcal bacteria in their nose and throat, but don't get sick. These people are known as carriers. Although carriers do not have any signs or symptoms, they can still spread the bacteria and make others sick. Since so many people carry the bacteria, most cases of meningococcal invasive disease appear to be random and are not linked to other cases.

Can people with meningococcal invasive disease pass the illness to others?

The infectious period for meningococcal disease is considered to be from 7 days before the person got sick to 1 day after he or she starts on antibiotics. This means that people who were in **close** contact with the sick person during this time are at higher than average risk to get meningococcal invasive disease.

People who are identified as **close** contacts should receive antibiotics to prevent them from getting the disease. The bacteria are **NOT SPREAD** by casual contact activities like being in the same work or school room as the sick person. The bacteria that cause meningococcal invasive disease are less infectious than the viruses that cause the common cold or flu.

What are the symptoms of meningococcal invasive disease?

- Confusion
- Fatigue (feeling very tired)
- Fever and chills
- In later stages, a dark purple rash
- Nausea and vomiting
- Rapid breathing
- Sensitivity to light
- Severe headache
- Stiff neck

How is meningococcal invasive disease diagnosed?

A health care provider diagnoses meningococcal invasive disease by obtaining the history of symptoms, performing a physical examination, and examining blood and spinal fluid.

What is the treatment for meningococcal invasive disease?

It is important that treatment be started as soon as possible. Most people with meningococcal disease are hospitalized and treated with antibiotics. (NOTE: It is very important to finish your antibiotics even if you begin to feel better, unless otherwise directed by your health care provider.) Depending on the severity of the infection, other treatments may also be necessary. These can include such things as breathing support, medications to treat low blood pressure, and wound care for parts of the body with damaged skin.

How can meningococcal invasive disease be prevented?

Meningococcal conjugate vaccine is the best way to prevent meningococcal invasive disease. The vaccine protects against four of the five types of bacteria (A, C, W, and Y) that cause almost all cases of meningococcal invasive disease worldwide. When you are 11-12 years old, you will need the first dose. When you are 16 years old, you will need a booster shot (an additional dose).

There are also vaccines to help protect against meningococcal type B. MenB vaccine is recommended for people 10 and older who are at increased risk. It may be given to people 16 through 23 years old (preferably at 16 through 18 years old) in addition to the routinely administered meningococcal conjugate vaccine, to help provide broader protection. Ask your healthcare provider if your child should receive this vaccine.

Where can I get additional information?

- Your health care provider
- Your local health department
<http://localhealth.nj.gov>
- NJ Department of Health website
www.nj.gov/health/cd
- Protect Me With 3+
www.protectmewith3.com
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
www.cdc.gov/meningococcal

HPV VACCINE: INFORMATION FOR PARENTS

As parents, you do everything you can to protect your children's health now and for the future. Did you know that you can protect them from several types of cancer with HPV vaccination?

What is human papillomavirus (HPV)?



Human papillomavirus (pap-ah-LO-mah-VYE-rus) (HPV) is a group of common viruses that affect both boys and girls. HPV can cause anal and mouth/throat cancers. It can also cause cancer in the cervix, vulva, and vagina in women; and cancer of the penis in men. Different types of HPV can cause genital warts.

Is there a cure?

There is no cure for HPV, but there are ways to treat the health problems caused by HPV such as genital warts and certain cancers. Most infections will clear on their own, but there is no way to know which people will develop cancer or other health problems. **Prevention is better than treatment.**

Is HPV vaccine safe?

The vaccine is very safe. Side effects are generally mild and may include a sore arm, fever, and headache.



Who should get HPV vaccine?

The vaccine is recommended for 11-12-year-old boys and girls because:

- ◆ The immune response to the HPV vaccine is better in preteens.
- ◆ Your child should be completely vaccinated before they are exposed to the virus.

Catch-up vaccination can be given at ages 13 through 26. The most important thing is for all preteens to complete the HPV vaccine series. Teens and young adults who haven't started or finished the HPV vaccine series should make an appointment today to get vaccinated.

Pregnant women and anyone who has ever had a life-threatening allergic reaction to any component of the vaccine or to a previous dose should not receive the vaccine.

What are the symptoms?

Even though most people do not show any symptoms, HPV can still be spread by skin-to-skin contact during any type of sexual activity with an infected person.

Most people will be infected at some point in their lives. HPV infection is most common during the late teens and early 20s.

- ◆ About 79 million Americans are currently infected with HPV.
- ◆ About 14 million people become infected each year.

How can HPV be prevented?

There are three vaccines to prevent HPV infections and related cancers:

- ◆ All vaccines help prevent the HPV types that cause cervical cancer.
- ◆ Two vaccines can be given to help protect against the HPV types that cause genital warts and certain cancers in both males and females.

What if we can't afford the vaccine?

Families who need help paying for vaccines should ask their health care provider about the Vaccines for Children (VFC) program. The VFC program provides vaccines to uninsured and underinsured children younger than 19 years old. Parents may have to pay administration and office visit fees. For more information, contact the NJ VFC at (609) 826-4862.

Where can I get more information?

- ◆ Your health care provider
- ◆ New Jersey Department of Health: <http://nj.gov/health/cd/vpdp/>
- ◆ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website: <http://www.cdc.gov/hpv/>
- ◆ Vaccines for Children (VFC) Program: <http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/programs/vfc/parents/qa-flyer.pdf>



