



## **Haemophilus influenzae Invasive Disease Fact Sheet**

### **What is *Haemophilus influenzae* invasive disease?**

*Haemophilus influenzae* is a bacteria that can live in people's noses and throats and usually cause no harm. The bacteria can, however, sometimes move to other parts of the body that are typically free from germs and cause different types of infections. For example, *H. influenzae* can invade the spinal fluid, causing meningitis, or the bloodstream, causing a blood infection. There are several different serotypes or strains of *H. influenzae* bacteria – types a-f, and also non-typeable.

### **Who gets *H. influenzae* invasive disease?**

*H. influenzae* invasive disease can occur in any age group, but mostly affects babies and young children. Adults can also become ill, especially those with particular types of medical conditions.

### **How is *H. influenzae* invasive disease spread?**

People can spread *H. influenzae* to others through respiratory droplets. This happens when someone who has the bacteria in their nose and throat coughs or sneezes. People who are not sick but have the bacteria in their noses and throats can still spread the bacteria. This is how *H. influenzae* spreads most of the time. The bacteria can also spread to people who have close contact with a person who has *H. influenzae* invasive disease.

### **What are the symptoms of *H. influenzae* invasive disease?**

Symptoms can vary depending on which part of the body is infected and may include fever, weakness, nausea, vomiting, cough, or stiff neck. Other infections can cause similar symptoms, so it is important to seek medical care to get the correct diagnosis and treatment.

### **How soon do symptoms appear?**

It is not known how long after *H. influenzae* enters the body that someone gets sick, mainly because the bacteria can be present in a person's body for a while without causing a problem. However, it could take as little as a few days.

### **When and for how long is a person able to spread *H. influenzae* invasive disease?**

The contagious period varies. Unless treated, it may be transmitted for as long as the organism is present in the nose and throat, even after symptoms have disappeared.

### **What is the treatment for *H. influenzae* invasive disease?**

Antibiotics are used to treat *H. influenzae* infections.

### **What are the possible complications associated with Hi invasive disease?**

Even with appropriate treatment, some *H. influenzae* invasive infections can result in long-term health problems or death. For example, blood infections (bacteremia) can result in loss of limbs. Meningitis (infection of the tissue covering the brain and spinal cord) can cause brain damage or hearing loss. Children with meningitis can die from the disease.

### **What can be done to prevent the spread of Hi invasive disease?**

There is a vaccine available that can prevent *H. influenzae* type b (Hib) disease. However, the Hib vaccine does not prevent illness caused by other types of *H. influenzae*. An antibiotic called rifampin is used in some circumstances as a preventative treatment specifically for household or close contacts who have been exposed to people with types a or b *H. influenzae* disease.

CDC recommends Hib vaccine for all children younger than 2 years old in the United States. Babies start getting the Hib vaccine at 2 months old (they need multiple doses for best protection). The recommended immunization schedule for children is available at: [http://dhss.alaska.gov/dph/Epi/iz/Documents/AK20160-6YearOldEasytoReadIZSchedule\\_AK.pdf](http://dhss.alaska.gov/dph/Epi/iz/Documents/AK20160-6YearOldEasytoReadIZSchedule_AK.pdf)