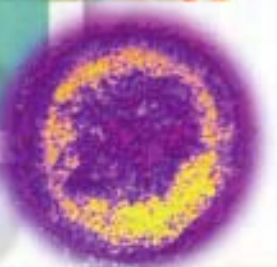


# MENINGOCOCCAL INFECTIONS



The meningococcal bacteria can cause diseases like meningitis and a form of blood poisoning known as septicaemia. The two forms of the disease can occur separately or together. Every year, a number of persons of all ages are affected by meningococcal disease.

## What is Meningitis?

Meningitis is the inflammation of the linings of the brain. It can be caused by certain types of viruses and bacteria. In most cases the infection is caused by viruses. People usually recover without complications. Bacterial meningitis can be more serious and for this reason needs immediate treatment for a favourable outcome. Meningococcal meningitis is one type of the bacterial form of the disease. Although many healthy persons carry the meningococcal bacteria at the back of the nose and throat, the disease is still rare.

## The symptoms of Meningitis

A person suffering from meningitis usually suffers from fever, headache, weakness, neck stiffness and dislike of bright lights. A skin rash may also be present. This is an important sign that suggests an infection with meningococcal bacteria.

## What is Septicaemia?

The meningococcal bacteria can also cause a form of blood poisoning known as septicaemia. This is a more serious form of infection resulting in potentially serious complications and at times even death. It is important to note that the symptoms of septicaemia can differ from those caused by meningitis alone.

Information on  
Meningococcal  
Disease



### The symptoms of Septicaemia

One of the main features of septicaemia is a skin rash. This starts as tiny red pin prick marks that quickly develop into purple bruises. Other symptoms include fever, weakness, nausea, vomiting and tummy ache.

### How is Meningococcal Disease spread?

The meningococcal bacteria are spread from one person to another in a way similar to that of common colds, by coughing and sneezing. For transmission to occur there has to be contact that is close as well as for a prolonged period of time. Persons considered at high risk include those living in the same house, kissing contacts, and other persons closely involved in the care of those affected by the disease.



### What can one do?

Although preventive medicines do exist this is **not**, however, indicated to persons who just had a casual form of contact such as used the same bus, talked to or sat next to somebody infected or walked past an infected person. On the other hand preventive medicines are necessary as soon as possible, when indicated and prescribed by a doctor. Only in certain circumstances is vaccination given.



Skin rash at the initial stages



Skin rash at a later stage



### Meningitis

- Fever
- Headache
- Weakness
- Neck Stiffness
- Nausea and Vomiting
- Pain in the Limbs
- Rash
- Dislike of Bright Light
- Fits

### Septicaemia

- Rash
- Fever
- Tummy Ache
- Diarrhoea
- Weakness
- Chills
- Pain in the Limbs
- Nausea and Vomiting

Babies may also show the following symptoms:

- Weakness
- Feed Refusal
- Stiffness



**a Patient may not present with all these symptoms**

### When should you consult your doctor?

If a person is suffering from suggestive symptoms or has come in contact with a case of meningococcal disease, a doctor should be contacted straight away. Meningococcal disease is serious and early treatment can prevent serious complications. On the other hand one should not immediately assume that every case of headache or fever is due to meningitis or septicaemia.

For further information...

...on meningococcal disease, you may ask your doctor or phone the **Disease Surveillance Branch of the Department of Public Health** on tel. nos. 324086 or 332235 Monday to Friday during office hours.



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