

***Haemophilus influenzae* Disease - Factsheet**

What is *Haemophilus influenzae* disease?

Bacteria called *Haemophilus influenzae* can cause many types of infections. Hib is one type of *Haemophilus influenzae* that can be prevented by vaccination. Hib may cause a variety of diseases such as meningitis (inflammation of the coverings of the spinal column and brain), blood stream infections, pneumonia, septic arthritis, epiglottitis and infections of other parts of the body.

What is *Haemophilus influenzae*, type b (Hib) disease?

Hib is one type of *Haemophilus influenzae* that can be prevented by vaccination.

What are the symptoms of *Haemophilus influenzae* disease?

Symptoms generally appear in less than 10 days after exposure, commonly within 2 to 4 days. Fever, vomiting, listlessness and a stiff neck or back are some common symptoms. Other symptoms depend upon the part of the body affected.

How is *Haemophilus influenzae* disease spread?

The bacteria spreads from person to person by direct contact with respiratory secretions such as mucus and saliva from someone who is sick.

How long are people contagious?

The length a person is contagious is unknown and it may be as long as the organism is present in respiratory droplets but often less than 24 hours after antibiotics are administered.

Who is at risk for *Haemophilus influenzae* disease?

Anyone can get *Haemophilus influenzae* disease, but certain people are at increased risk. Serious *H. influenzae*, including Hib, disease occurs mostly in children younger than 5 years and adults 65 years or older. People who live with or go to daycare with someone who has Hib disease are at increased risk of getting infected. Certain medical conditions can also put people at increased risk for *Haemophilus influenzae* disease.

- Sickle cell disease
- Asplenia (no spleen)
- HIV infection
- Antibody and complement deficiency syndromes
- Cancer requiring certain treatments

Do infected people need to be kept home from school, work, or daycare?

People who have a *Haemophilus influenzae* infection will likely need hospital treatment. People infected with meningococci may spread the bacteria until 24 hours after proper antibiotics were started.

What treatment is available?

Antibiotics are used to treat *Haemophilus influenzae* disease. Early diagnosis and treatment are important.

How can I protect myself and my family from getting a pneumococcal

infection?

- All children should be vaccinated against Hib beginning at approximately 2-months of age.
- If you have been in close contact with the ill person, preventive medication is only recommended in specific instances. For example, preventive treatment with an antibiotic is recommended for household members when there is at least one unvaccinated child under 4-years old in the home.
- You should also wash hands well and often with soap and water and teach children to wash their hands too. (Sanitizing gel may be substituted when hands are not visibly soiled.)
- Always cover your nose and mouth when you cough or sneeze, and then wash your hands.