

## How do I know if I have Meningitis?



Headache



Fever



Stiff neck



Drowsiness or confusion



Eyes sensitive to light



Nausea or vomiting



Fits



Skin rash

For more information contact  
your nearest Health Care Facility.



Graphics courtesy of WHO

**Do not Delay!**  
**Seek Medical Treatment Immediately!**

Acknowledgment: Dept. of National Health.



# MENINGITIS

## What is Meningitis?





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Meningitis is an infection of the layers of tissue which cover the brain and spinal cord. Meningitis is curable.

This infection can result in permanent brain damage or DEATH if not treated early.

## What causes Meningitis?

Meningitis can be caused by germs. These germs may cause different types of meningitis. One of these germs (*Neisseria meningitidis*) causes meningococcal meningitis which is highly infectious and can kill within a very short time.

## How does it spread?

Spread occurs through contact with fine droplets of discharges expelled from the nose or mouth of the infected person. Examples: kissing, sneezing, coughing and sharing of used eating utensils/cigarettes or sharing confined spaces (bed space, class rooms, crechés etc.)

## Who is at risk?

Close contacts such as:

- ❖ members of the same household
- ❖ persons sharing the same classroom or office
- ❖ anyone who has been in direct physical contact with the infected person
- ❖ health care contacts who were in direct contact with the infected person

## How to avoid spreading infection?

Treatment must be given to close/direct contacts.

To avoid spreading this and other infections everyone must cover nose and mouth when sneezing or coughing and wash hands frequently.

Avoid kissing sick people (especially babies) on the mouth and don't share used eating utensils or cigarettes.

Also avoid overcrowding conditions.

## How do you know if you have meningitis

You can develop headache, fever, stiff neck, drowsiness or confusion, eyes become sensitive to light, skin rash and fits.

## Treatment

Meningococcal disease is potentially fatal and should always be viewed as a medical emergency. Admission to a hospital is required.

Antimicrobial therapy must be commenced as soon as possible.

## Prevention

Vaccines are available to prevent certain types of meningitis (*Neisseria Meningitidis*, serogroups A, C, Y, W135). These vaccines have been proven to be safe and effective with infrequent and mild side effects. The vaccines may not provide adequate protection for 10 to 14 days following injection. Vaccines provide protection for only three to five years and cannot be used in children under 2 years of age because they lack the ability to develop antibodies.

Protection of close contacts: When a sporadic case occurs, the close contacts need to be protected by chemoprophylaxis with antibiotics.

## Travellers' health information

Meningitis (*Neisseria meningitidis*) causes outbreaks in parts of Africa. Travellers to areas affected by meningitis outbreaks are advised to be vaccinated at least ten days prior to their arrival in the country. For pilgrims to Mecca, Saudi Arabia, vaccination against meningitis is required.

## What to do

If you have any symptoms immediately go to the nearest Hospital or Clinic for treatment.

