

What can be done to prevent getting meningococcal or meningitis?

Bacterial meningitis – Immunisation. Get your child or yourself immunised with the available meningitis/meningococcal vaccines. If you or your child has contact with someone who gets bacterial meningitis, check with your doctor about prevention.

Do NOT share drink bottles or food. Cover your mouth and nose when sneezing. Wash your hands regularly especially after going to the bathroom or changing a nappy. Avoid mouth to mouth kissing with strangers, sharing a drinking glass, lipstick, food.

Viral meningitis – Do NOT share drink bottles, food. Cover your mouth and nose when sneezing. Wash your hands regularly especially after going to the bathroom or changing a nappy.

Hygiene

The viruses and bacteria that cause most cases of meningitis are spread by prolonged, close personal contact. However, if immunity is low, viral meningitis can spread quickly. In addition, thorough hand washing with soap and water may reduce the transmission of viruses in the household or in childcare facilities.

Meningitis/meningococcal vaccines

Viral meningitis cannot be prevented, however most bacterial meningitis can. The following is a list of vaccinations available in Australia to help prevent against meningitis and meningococcal.

Meningococcal C – given to children at 12 months of age through the National Immunisation Plan.

Meningococcal B – Bexsero vaccine available by prescription.

Meningococcal ACWY – Menveo, Menactra and Nimenrix brands are available through prescription from your GP. However some states in Australia vaccinate the 15 and 19 year old age group for free. Check with your state immunisation program 1800 671 811.

Pneumococcal – Pneumococcal conjugate (13vPCV) given at 2 months, 4 months, 6 months through the National Immunisation Plan. Also for those aged 65 years and over (polysaccharide 23vPPV).

Haemophilus influenzae type B (Hib) – given at 2 months, 4 months, 6 months and 12 months through the National Immunisation Plan.



*Raising awareness.
Every second counts.*

For further information about meningitis/meningococcal visit:
meningitis.com.au



**MENINGITIS
CENTRE
AUSTRALIA**

*Raising awareness.
Every second counts.*

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Founding member of the Confederation
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Meningococcal and Meningitis

The Facts You Need to Know



Free Call 1800 250 223

What is meningitis and meningococcal?

Meningitis means inflammation of the membranes 'meninges' lining the brain. There are many types of meningitis and while the symptoms are often similar, the causes, treatments and outcomes can vary greatly. This brochure provides some important information on the most common types of meningitis.

Meningococcal is a bacteria that enters the body, however meningococcal disease does not always lead to meningitis. It only leads to meningitis if the bacteria affects the meninges of the brain.

What causes meningitis?

The organisms that usually cause meningitis and meningococcal include bacteria, viruses, parasites and fungi. The bacteria that cause meningitis are common and are spread from person-to-person by respiratory secretions. Fortunately, these bacteria rarely cause illness. However, if immunity is low, you are at a higher risk.

How serious is meningitis?

Meningitis is a very serious illness. However, if the cause is diagnosed and treated quickly, most people make a complete recovery. With bacterial meningitis, the patient will usually become very ill within hours. Prompt antibiotic therapy can mean the difference between life and death.

What should you do if you think someone might have meningitis?

See your GP immediately. If your GP is not immediately available, go straight to the nearest hospital emergency department. If your GP or the hospital has reassured you, do not hesitate to return to the GP or hospital immediately if the symptoms worsen. Remember, meningitis can progress rapidly.

Types of Meningitis

Bacterial meningitis

Bacterial meningitis is the most common life threatening type of meningitis and can cause death within hours. Most cases of bacterial meningitis in children and adults are caused by meningococcal and pneumococcal bacteria.

Death occurs in about 5-15% of cases of bacterial meningitis and, in addition, about 20% of patients are left with a permanent disability including cerebral palsy, limb amputation, deafness, or learning difficulty. The most common causes of bacterial meningitis in newborn babies include Group B streptococcal, E coli, and Listeria bacteria.

Viral meningitis

Viral meningitis is quite a common complication of some common viral illnesses e.g. herpes simplex virus, echovirus. Viral meningitis is rarely fatal and not usually injurious unless the patient also has an immune disease.













Amoebic meningitis

Amoebic meningitis is very rare. It is usually caused by water containing amoeba being forced up the nose when jumping into unchlorinated swimming holes when the water temperature is about 30°C.

Fungal meningitis

Fungal meningitis is very rare and usually occurs only in patients with an immune disease, such as leukaemia or AIDS. Fungal meningitis is usually slow to start and difficult to diagnose and treat.

Signs and symptoms of meningitis

	Babies	Children & Adults
 Fever, cold hands and feet	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
 Vomiting	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
 Tired/floppy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
 Blank expression	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
 Dislikes being handled	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
 Rapid breathing/grunting	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
 Pale blotchy skin/spots/rash	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
 Unusual crying/refuses to feed	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
 Bulging soft spot on top of head	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
 Stiff neck/dislikes bright lights	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
 Severe headache	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
 Fitting/stiff jerking movements	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

**If you suspect meningitis, seek urgent medical advice.
Do not wait for all symptoms or the rash to appear.**