

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 deep kissing, sharing a drinking glass, lipstick, food.

Viral meningitis – Cover your mouth and nose when you sneeze and cough. Use a tissue or even your elbow to sneeze and cough into, to stop your hands from becoming contaminated.

Wash your hands in warm soapy water after the toilet, gardening, changing a nappy or sneezing and coughing.

Don't share drinks, food or cigarettes.

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 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 B – Free Men B vaccine for 2,4,6 and 12 month olds for ATSI babies on the National Immunisation Plan. In South Australia only, Free Men B for ALL 6 weeks, 4 and 12 month olds and 14 -15 year olds or those in Year 10.

Meningococcal ACWY – FREE ACWY vaccine for ALL 12 month olds and 14-16 year olds on the National Immunisation Plan.

Pneumococcal – FREE Prevenar 13 vaccine for ALL 2, 4, 6 [ATSI babies], 12 months, 4 years [ATSI children – WA, NT, SA, Qld], and 70+ years [50+ years for medically at risk, ATSI people].

Haemophilus influenzae type B (Hib) – FREE for ALL 2,4,6,18 month olds.

****Check with your GP if you are medically at risk and require more vaccines.****

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



**MENINGITIS
CENTRE
AUSTRALIA**

*Raising awareness.
Every second counts.*

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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.**