



Haemophilus Influenzae Type b Fact Sheet

What is Haemophilus influenzae type b (Hib) disease?

Hib causes a serious bacterial infection in young children. Hib disease most commonly causes meningitis (infection of the coverings of the spinal cord and brain) which may result in long lasting brain and nerve problems. Hib can also cause blood infections, pneumonia, arthritis, and infections in other parts of the body. In some instances, Hib disease may cause death.

Who gets Hib disease?

Hib disease is most common in children between 3 months and 3 years of age. Adults over 65 and individuals with weakened immune system are also at greater risk.

How is Hib disease spread?

Hib disease spreads by contact with mucus or droplets from the nose and throat of an infected person. It spreads through the air after an infected person coughs or sneezes without covering their mouth or nose.

What are the symptoms of Hib disease?

Hib disease usually causes fever, nausea and vomiting. Individuals with Hib disease may become irritable or sluggish. The bacteria can infect different parts of the body, so other symptoms may occur.

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How long is an infected person able to spread Hib disease?

An infected person can spread Hib disease for as long as the bacteria are present in the nose and throat, even after they appear to be well. After 1 to 2 days of treatment with Rifampin, an infected person cannot spread Hib disease.

Can a person get Hib disease again?

Yes. One infection does not protect from getting Hib disease again.

What is the treatment for Hib disease?

Antibiotics are used to treat serious infections.

Should people who have been around a person infected with Hib disease be treated?

Some household members, daycare center playmates, and children under 4 years of age who had close or lengthy contact with an infected person may need to take an antibiotic like Rifampin to prevent illness. Persons who have had casual contact such as occurs in a regular classroom, office or factory setting usually do not need treatment.

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How can the spread of Hib disease be stopped?

There are several vaccines for Hib disease currently available. The vaccine should be given to young children beginning at 2 months of age. This is especially important for those children attending day care centers. For more information about the Hib vaccine, contact your county health department.

*For further information, contact the
Oklahoma City-County Health
Department (405) 425-4437*

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