

Haemophilus Influenzae (H. flu) Type B (Hib)

What is Hib disease?

Haemophilus influenzae type b, also called Hib disease, is a bacterial illness that can cause infections that are often severe, particularly among infants. Hib may cause a variety of diseases such as bacterial meningitis (inflammation and swelling of the tissue that covers the spinal column and brain), blood stream infections, pneumonia, arthritis and infections in other parts of the body.

How do I get Hib disease?

Hib disease is spread through contact with mucus or droplets from the nose and throat of an infected person. It can spread from person to person through sneezing, coughing or close contact with an infected person. A person does not have to have symptoms to be infectious and spread the disease. Hib disease can occur in any age group, but is most common in children two months to three years of age.

Symptoms

The most common and severe manifestation of Hib disease is bacterial meningitis. Symptoms of meningitis include fever, weakness, stiff neck and vomiting. Hib disease can also cause infection of the lungs, blood, joints, bones, throat and covering of the heart. Symptoms depend on the part of the body infected.

How long is an infected person contagious (able to spread the disease)?

An infected person can spread Hib disease as long as the bacteria are present in the nose or throat, and sometimes after they appear to be well. A person does not have to have symptoms to spread the disease. An infected person can no longer spread the disease after appropriate treatment by a health care provider.

Treatment for Hib disease

- Treatment with antibiotics should start immediately. Household members, childcare center classmates and young children who have had contact with an infected person may need to receive antibiotics as a preventive treatment.
- Meningitis and other serious infections caused by Hib disease can lead to brain damage or death.

Prevention

Immunization is the only effective way to prevent Hib disease:

- Immunize children with the *Haemophilus influenzae* type b vaccine (the number of doses a child needs to complete depends on the child's age). The Hib vaccine can be given in children as young as two months of age.
- Follow the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's recommended childhood immunization schedule (ask your health care provider or local health department for a copy).

If you think you have Hib disease

- See your health care provider immediately.
- If your job involves caring for small children, do not go to work and contact your health care provider.
- Children who have Hib disease should not go to child care settings until they have seen a health care provider and finished recommended antibiotic treatment.

