

ALLEGAN COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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Office Administration

(269) 673-5411

Bioterrorism Preparedness

673-5411

Personal Health

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Communicable Disease

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Environmental Health

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Resource Recovery

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Bacterial Meningitis

What is Bacterial Meningitis?

Meningitis is an infection of the fluid surrounding the brain and spinal cord and is usually caused by a virus or bacteria. Bacterial meningitis is generally more severe than viral meningitis and usually requires hospitalization. A variety of bacteria can cause bacterial meningitis, including *Neisseria meningitidis*, *Streptococcus pneumoniae*, *Haemophilus influenzae*, *Listeria monocytogenes*, and Group B *streptococcus*.

How is it spread?

It is spread through the respiratory droplets of an infected person when they sneeze or cough. It can also be spread by direct contact with nose or throat secretions of an infected person by kissing, sharing drinking glasses, water bottles, or eating utensils.

What is the incubation period?

It takes about 4-10 days after contact for symptoms of systemic infection to occur.

What are the symptoms?

Symptoms may include sudden high fever, intense headache, nausea and vomiting, stiff neck and back, sensitivity to bright light, confusion, difficulty breathing, shock, and possible rash. Newborns and infants may be slow or inactive, irritable, and refuse to eat.

How is bacterial meningitis treated?

Bacterial meningitis generally requires hospitalization and is treated with antibiotics. Sometimes, household members or very close contacts of the infected person are also treated with antibiotics to prevent the development of the disease.

How can Bacterial Meningitis be prevented?

Avoid direct contact with respiratory secretions of an infected person. Hand washing is important. If you have been exposed to someone who has been diagnosed with bacterial meningitis, consult with our doctor. Several vaccines are available to prevent bacterial meningitis. The most effective way to protect you and your child against certain types of bacterial meningitis is to get vaccinated. There are vaccines for three types of bacteria that can cause meningitis. Make sure you and your child are vaccinated on schedule.

More information can be found at www.cdc.gov/meningitis

This fact sheet is not intended to replace the advice of your physician. Parents should contact their healthcare provider if they have concerns regarding their child's health. If you have general questions, you may contact an Allegan County Public Health Nurse at 269-673-5411.