

# ***Haemophilus influenzae* b Infection**

## **Information for the Public**

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### **What is *Haemophilus influenzae* b (Hib) disease?**

*Haemophilus influenzae* type b (Hib) is a serious infection caused by bacteria. It usually affects children under the age of 5 years. Before Hib vaccine, Hib disease was the leading cause of bacterial meningitis among children under 5 years old in the United States.

### **Is Hib disease dangerous?**

Yes, before Hib vaccine, there were 20,000 children less than 5 years old in the U. S. got severe Hib disease and nearly 1,000 of them died. When Hib vaccine was introduced in 1988, Hib disease in infants and young children has decreased dramatically by 99% to less than 1 case per 100,000 younger than 5 years of age.

### **How is Hib spread?**

A child can get Hib disease by being around other children or adults who may have the bacteria and not know it. The germ spread from one person to another by direct contact with secretions from the nose and throat that contain the bacteria. If the germs stay in child's nose and throat, the child probably will not get sick. But sometimes the germs spread into the lungs or the bloodstream, and then Hib can cause serious disease. Hib disease can also spread in very crowded situations such as daycare.

### **Who is at risk for Hib disease?**

Infants, young children, household contacts of patients with Hib disease, daycare classmates, and American Indian/Alaska Native populations are at increased risk for Hib disease. Children and adults with sickle cell anemia, no spleen, weakened immune system or who are on drugs or treatments that weaken the immune system also are at higher risk for Hib.

### **How can you prevent Hib disease?**

- Protect your children by getting them vaccinated
  - All infants should get a series of four Hib shots starting when they are 2 months old. The rest of the shots are at 4, 6 and 15 months. There are different schedules for babies between 7 and 15 months old who missed the shots when they were younger. Children 15 months through 4 years of age need at least 1 dose
- Practice good personal hygiene including proper and frequent hand washing

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## **Division of Infectious Disease Epidemiology**

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- Do not share eating utensils or drinking cups, water bottles, cans, drinking straws, toothbrushes

### **Do I need to take antibiotics to prevent Hib disease?**

A person **needs to take antibiotics** to prevent Hib disease if he/she:

- Lives in the same house with a person who got Hib disease and
  - Household has at least 1 contact younger than 4 years of age who is unimmunized or incompletely immunized
  - Household with a child younger than 12 months of age who has not received the primary series of Hib series
  - Household with a contact who is an immunocompromised child, regardless of that child's Hib immunization status
- Is a nursery school or childcare center contact and when 2 or more cases of Hib invasive disease have occurred within 60 days

A person who **does not need antibiotics** to prevent Hib disease if:

- He/she is an occupant of household with no children younger than 4 years of age other than the index patient
- He/she is an occupant of household when all household contacts 12 to 48 months of age have completed their Hib immunization series and when household contacts younger than 12 months of age have completed their primary series of Hib immunizations
- Is a nursery school and child care contact of 1 index case, especially those older than 2 years of age
- She is pregnant

Talk to your local health department to help you determine if you need antibiotics.

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