



**NL Health
Services**

Infection Prevention and
Control

FACT SHEET

Invasive Meningococcal Disease

**HAND HYGIENE:
THE BEST
WAY TO PREVENT
INFECTION**

What is Invasive Meningococcal Disease?

Invasive Meningococcal Disease (IMD) is a serious communicable disease caused by the bacteria *Neisseria meningitidis* resulting in meningitis (an infection of the lining of the brain and spinal cord) and bloodstream infections. Meningitis and bloodstream infections require immediate medical attention. The incubation period (time from contact to illness) can range from 2-10 days, most often 3-4 days. The infectious period (time during which the individual can spread to others) is 7 days before the start of symptoms to 24 hours after the start of appropriate treatment. It is most common in individuals 15-19 years of age.

What are the symptoms of Meningococcal Disease?

Symptoms usually start suddenly and can include:

- Stiff neck
- Vomiting
- Severe headache
- Irritability
- High fever
- Drowsiness
- Sensitivity to light
- Purple, bruise-like rash

How is IMD spread?

These bacteria can be carried by some individuals and not cause any problems; however, these individuals can transmit the infection to others. IMD is spread through contact with oral or nasal secretions of the nose or mouth by kissing, sneezing, coughing, and by sharing eating utensils or drinks.

How to reduce the spread of IMD?

- Practice good hand hygiene and routine cleaning.
- Cover your coughs, sneezes; wash hands after coughing and sneezing.
- Do not share food/drink, lipsticks, cigarettes, water bottles, etc.
- Get the vaccine. Children in NL routinely receive the meningococcal vaccine at 12 months of age and again in grade 4.

What to do if you have IMD.

- While in hospital, you will be placed on droplet precautions to prevent transmission to other clients or staff.
- Identify and treat close contacts. These may include:
 - Household members.
 - Children and staff in childcare and nursery school facilities.
 - Individuals who have had direct contact with secretions of the mouth or nose of an infected individual.
- Those considered close contacts of the infected individual will be prescribed an antibiotic. This antibiotic lowers the risk of getting the disease and spreading it to others.
- If you have been in direct contact with an infected individual who is sick, you must be seen by a health care provider right away.