

## How is it prevented?

Vaccination is the best way to reduce your chances of contracting meningococcal disease. As of 2010, The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) recommends a dose of meningococcal conjugate vaccine (MCV4) at 11-12 years and a booster dose at 16 years. The vaccine has been approved for 9 months-55 years old. The vaccine protects against the invasive disease-causing serogroups A, C, Y and W-135. In 2011, all 6<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> graders\* in Arizona are required to receive the 1<sup>st</sup> dose of the vaccine before school entry.

To prevent meningitis and other illnesses, it is good practice to avoid sharing personal items and to maintain a healthy lifestyle.

\*Note: School requirements for MCV4 vaccination are updated yearly—adding an additional grade each year until all grades 6-12 are required to be vaccinated.

## How is it diagnosed?

Initial diagnosis of meningococcal disease can be made by collecting blood samples or cerebrospinal fluid and sending them to the laboratory for testing. The diagnosis is usually confirmed by growing cultures, but agglutination tests or gram stain testing may also be used.

## How do I report this to the health department?

Meningococcal disease must be reported to your county health department. Submit a report by telephone or through an electronic reporting system authorized by the department within 24 hours after a case or suspected case is diagnosed, treated, or detected.

The health department investigates close contacts of meningococcal disease patients to administer prophylaxis.

## If you have questions, contact:



Office of Infectious Disease Services

150 N. 18th Avenue, Suite 140

Phoenix, AZ 85007-3237

Phone: (602) 364-3676 Fax: (602) 364-3199

Website: [www.azdhs.gov](http://www.azdhs.gov)

### Resources:

[www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)

<http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/pubs/pinkbook/index.html>

# Meningococcal Disease



## Information for Healthcare Professionals

*Arizona Department of Health Services*

## What is Meningococcal Disease?

Meningococcal disease, caused by the bacterium *Neisseria meningitidis*, is a serious bacterial infection that can cause swelling of the lining around the brain and spinal cord (meningitis) and/or blood infection (meningococemia).

## What are the symptoms?

Symptoms may appear 2-10 days after exposure, but usually occur within five days.

They may include:

- Sudden high fever
- Headache
- Stiff neck
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Confusion
- Exhaustion
- Purple rash

It is important to seek medical attention immediately. Even when the disease is diagnosed early and adequate treatment is given, 9-12% of people die, typically within 24-48 hours after the onset of symptoms. As many as 20% of cases may result in neurological disability, limb loss, or hearing loss.

## Who gets it?

Anyone can get meningococcal disease, but pre-teens and teens are at an increased risk. Some factors can increase the risk of becoming infected such as:

- History of respiratory infection
- Having a deficiency of a terminal complement pathway
- Smoking and exposure to secondhand smoke
- Living in close quarters (dormitories, boarding schools, sleep-away camps)
- Being in crowded situations for long periods of time
- Moving to a new residence or attending a new school



## How is it transmitted?

The bacteria are spread from person to person by direct contact with the oral and respiratory secretions of an infected person.

Close and prolonged contact (such as kissing, sneezing or coughing on someone, living in close quarters, or sharing utensils with an infected person) facilitates the spread of the disease. Anyone in close contact with infected individuals such as a boyfriend/girlfriend, daycare attendees, household members, roommates, and sports team members should consult with their physician to see if they need prophylactic antibiotics.