

***Haemophilus influenzae* Type b Fact Sheet**

1. **What is *Haemophilus influenzae* type b (HIB) disease?** - Until recently, HIB disease was one of the most important causes of bacterial infection in young children. HIB may cause a variety of diseases such as meningitis (inflammation of the coverings of the spinal column and brain), blood stream infections, pneumonia, arthritis and infections of other parts of the body.
2. **Who gets HIB disease?**
 - a. HIB disease can occur in any age group. Due to widespread use of HIB vaccine in children, very few cases are now reported each year in Pennsylvania. HIB is now diagnosed more often in the elderly, unimmunized children and people who are immunocompromised.
 - b. Before HIB vaccine, HIB disease was the leading cause of bacterial meningitis among children under 5 years old in the United States. About 20,000 children got severe HIB disease each year and nearly 1,000 died.
3. **How is spread?** - HIB may be transmitted through contact with mucus or droplets from the nose and throat of an infected person.
4. **What are the symptoms of HIB disease?** - Symptoms may include fever, lethargy, vomiting and a stiff neck. Other symptoms depend upon the part of the body affected.
5. **How soon do symptoms appear?** - The incubation period for HIB disease is unknown, but is probably less than one week.
6. **When and for how long is a person able to spread HIB disease?** - The contagious period varies. Unless treated, it may be transmitted for as long as the HIB organism is present in the nose and throat, even after symptoms have disappeared.
7. **Does past infection with HIB make a person immune?** - Children who had HIB disease when younger than 24 months of age may be at risk of getting HIB disease again. Children and adults who had HIB disease when 24 months of age or older are likely to be immune.
8. **What is the treatment for HIB disease?** - Antibiotics are used to treat serious infections.
9. **What are the possible complications associated with HIB disease?** - If HIB meningitis occurs, a certain proportion of those who recover may suffer long-lasting neurologic problems such as learning problems, hearing loss, and/or mental retardation. In some instances, cases may be fatal.

10. **What can be done to prevent the spread of HIB?** - There are currently several HIB vaccines licensed by the United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for use in children as early as two months of age. Immunization authorities recommend that all children be immunized with an approved HIB vaccine beginning at two months of age and HIB vaccine is now a routine component of the national child immunization schedule. Recommendations for scheduling of subsequent doses vary depending on the manufacturer. Therefore, it is important to consult with your physician.

11. **What can be done for people exposed to a case of HIB?** – The drug Rifampin is used in some circumstances as preventive treatment (prophylaxis) for persons who have been exposed to HIB. Since severe disease is generally limited to young children, only close contacts who have incompletely vaccinated children under two years of age in their households need prophylactic antibiotics.

12. **For more information about HIB:** <http://www.cdc.gov/hi-disease/about/>

13. **For more information about HIB vaccine:** <http://www.cdc.gov/hi-disease/vaccination.html>

This fact sheet provides general information. Please contact your physician for specific clinical information.