

What is *Haemophilus influenzae* type b disease?

Haemophilus influenzae type b (Hib) causes a serious bacterial infection in young children, most commonly meningitis (infection of the coverings of the spinal cord and brain). Some persons who recover from Hib meningitis may have long-lasting brain and nerve problems. Hib can also cause blood infections, pneumonia, arthritis, and infections in other parts of the body. In some instances, Hib disease may cause death.

Who gets Hib disease?

Hib disease is most common in children between 3 months and 3 years of age.

How is Hib disease spread?

It is spread through the air after an infected person coughs or sneezes, especially if he/she does not cover their mouth or nose.

What are the symptoms of Hib disease?

Hib disease usually causes fever, nausea and vomiting. Persons with Hib disease may become irritable or sluggish. The bacteria can infect different parts of the body, so other symptoms may occur.

How long is an infected person able to spread Hib disease?

An infected person can spread Hib disease for as long as the bacteria are present in the nose and throat, even after he appears to be well or after 1 to 2 days of treatment with effective antibiotic therapy.

Can a person get Hib disease again?

Yes, one infection does not protect from getting Hib disease again.

What is the treatment for Hib disease?

Antibiotics are used to treat serious infections.

Should people who have been around a person infected with Hib disease be treated?

Some household members, child care playmates, and children under 4 years of age who have been around an infected person may need to take an antibiotic like Rifampin to prevent illness in themselves or those around them. Persons who have had casual contact in a regular classroom, office, or factory setting usually do not need treatment.

How can the spread of Hib disease be stopped?

There are several vaccines for Hib disease currently available. The vaccine should be given to young children beginning at 2 months old. This is especially important for those children attending child care. For more information about the Hib vaccine, contact your local health department.