

**FACT SHEET  
FOR CHILD CARE ADMINISTRATORS**

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***Haemophilus influenzae* type b**

- *Haemophilus influenzae* type b (Hib) is a rare cause of serious disease in young children. Commonly called *H. flu*, this bacteria has nothing to do with flu virus and does not cause "the flu."
- Nearly all cases of Hib disease occur in children under 4 years old and most cases occur in children between 2 months to 3 years. For children who develop meningitis, 2-5% will die and most of the survivors will have permanent neurologic problems such as hearing loss or deafness, learning disabilities and mental retardation.
- Occasionally there are clusters of cases reported in child care centers of all types (babysitters, mother's day out, home child care and centers).
- Symptoms of the disease vary with the type of illness the child develops, but high fever, irritability, lethargy or other unusual behavior are consistent with Hib disease.
- The bacteria are spread from person-to-person by contact with the organisms found in nose and throat secretions through coughing, sneezing, etc. The reasons that some children become ill and others do not is not clearly understood.
- An antibiotic, rifampin, eliminates the Hib bacteria from the nose and throat of persons carrying it, thus reducing the risk of exposed young children developing a serious Hib infection. It is important for all children and employees having at least four hours of contact with the ill child in the week before onset or hospitalization to take rifampin, unless immunization criteria are met. Call the Iowa Department of Public Health, Center for Acute Disease Epidemiology, (800) 362-2736 for follow-up assistance. This prevents disease in those already exposed.
- Persons who are known to be allergic to rifampin and women who are pregnant or who might be pregnant should not take rifampin. Persons wearing soft contact lenses should remove the lenses for the four day treatment period as rifampin may discolor them. Rifampin will turn the urine a reddish-orange color and may decrease the effectiveness of birth control pills.
- There are now several vaccines to prevent Hib disease. All children should receive the full Hib series. The approved conjugate vaccines are recommended for all children beginning at 2 months old.
- For further information, contact your medical provider, local health department or the Iowa Department of Public Health, Center for Acute Disease Epidemiology (800) 362-2736.