



## Haemophilus Influenzae Disease - Invasive

### ***What is Haemophilus influenzae disease (Hi)?***

Hi disease is caused by the Haemophilus influenzae bacteria that can cause serious illness, especially in young children. If the bacteria enters the blood or spinal fluid (referred to as “invasive disease”) it can cause serious infection. Despite the name, it is not related to influenza.

Hi with b serotype (Hib) is the most infectious form of the disease and can lead to complications like meningitis (inflammation of the coverings of the brain and spinal cord), bloodstream infections, pneumonia, arthritis and infections of other parts of the body. Since an effective vaccine has been available, very few cases of Hib disease are now diagnosed.

### ***How is it spread?***

The Hi bacteria are commonly present in the nose and throat. Bacteria are spread from person to person in droplets through sneezing and/or coughing. People can carry the Hi bacteria and spread the disease without becoming ill themselves.

### ***What are the symptoms?***

Fever is one symptom that is present in all forms of Hi infections. Other symptoms of Hb infection depend on the part of the body affected. Meningitis is the most common illness of invasive Hi disease, followed by epiglottitis and bloodstream infections. Symptoms of meningitis may include sudden onset of fever, vomiting, lethargy and stiff neck. Epiglottitis is a medical emergency as swelling of the epiglottis can lead to difficulty breathing and can be life-threatening. People can also have infection of the heart, pneumonia, and joints.

### ***How soon do symptoms of Hib disease appear?***

Symptoms generally appear less than 10 days after exposure, usually within two to four days.

### ***How long is a person with Hib disease contagious?***

The contagious period varies and, unless treated, can last for as long as the bacteria is present in the nose and throat, even after symptoms have disappeared. A person can no longer spread Hib disease after taking antibiotics for one to two days.

### ***How is Hib disease diagnosed?***

The diagnosis is usually made through laboratory tests using a sample of infected body fluid, like blood or spinal fluid.

### ***What is the treatment for Hib disease?***

Antibiotics are generally used to treat serious infections.

### ***How do I protect myself and others?***

Hib is the only strain of Hi that is covered by immunization. The most important way to prevent Hib disease is vaccination. Contact your health care provider or the [Immunization Program](#) at the Health Unit if you have questions on immunization.

The following are also helpful in preventing the spread of illness:

- Cover mouth and nose when coughing and/or sneezing
- Do not drink from the same glass, water bottle, or straw of others
- Do not share cigarettes or vapes
- Wash your hands well after coughing, sneezing going to the washroom and before eating or preparing food. This is important because hand to mouth contact is a common way of spreading many germs.

Sometimes the Hi infection spreads to other people who have had close or lengthy contact with a person with Hi disease (households, childcare). In certain cases, people in close contact with that person should receive antibiotics to prevent them from getting the disease. This is known as prophylaxis. Public Health will contact those that may need prophylaxis.

For information call Infectious Diseases: ext. 8809.