



HAEMOPHILUS influenzae type b (Hib)

What is Hib?

Hib infection is caused by a germ (or bacteria) called *Haemophilus influenzae* type b. It usually infects children under the age of five. Hib can cause serious and life-threatening infections, including meningitis (an infection of the lining that covers the brain), septicemia (an infection of the blood) and epiglottitis. The epiglottis is the tissue in the throat that covers and protects the larynx (windpipe) during swallowing.

How is it spread?

Hib is spread through close contact with an infected person by their nose and throat secretions from coughs and sneezes. Hib can also be spread by oral contact such as kissing or sharing drinks or by touching objects contaminated by the infected person and then touching your nose or mouth.

What are the symptoms?

Infection usually starts suddenly with fever, vomiting, lack of energy, confusion, headache, and stiff neck.

When do symptoms start?

Illness usually occurs within a few days of becoming infected. Symptoms can come on suddenly (in a matter of a few hours) or more gradually (over a few days).

How long are people infectious?

Individuals may be infectious seven days prior to onset of symptoms until 24 hours after start of effective treatment. Individuals are no longer infectious after 24 hours of treatment with effective antibiotics.

How can Hib be prevented?

Hib is a vaccine-preventable disease. All children should be immunized against this infection at two, four, six and 18 months of age.

Families should practice the following good health habits:

- Clean hands well and often and teach children to clean their hands too.
- Do not share eating or drinking utensils.
- Clean surfaces that are frequently touched, including toys, door knobs, tables, and counters regularly with soap and water or cleaning wipes.
- Minimize close contact with people when they are sick.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze, put your used tissue in the trash can and clean your hands. If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve or elbow.

What is the treatment?

Antibiotics are used to treat Hib. To prevent the spread of Hib to other children in the household, all family members are prescribed an antibiotic called Rifampin, which is taken by mouth.