

# Stop the Spread of Meningococcal Disease



## The Disease

Meningococcal disease is a rare but potentially serious infection caused by meningococcal bacteria (*Neisseria meningitidis*). While meningococcal disease and its complications are uncommon, the consequences can be devastating.

**Death occurs in about 1 out of 10 cases, even with treatment.**

Even with treatment, **up to 1/3** of survivors can have long-term problems such as hearing loss, brain damage, or partial or complete amputation of arms or legs.

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## Causes in Canada

Five kinds of bacteria – known as Groups A, B, C, Y, and W135 – cause almost all cases of meningococcal disease.

## Who is at Risk?

Meningococcal disease is most common in:

- children less than 5 years old
- young adults aged 15 to 24

Even so, the disease can occur in people at any age.

## How is it Spread?

The disease spreads through close contact and sharing items like drinks, cutlery, or toys.

## Carriers of the Bacteria

1 in 5 healthy teens and adults are carriers of the bacteria. Carriers can sometimes spread the bacteria to others.

## Recognize the Symptoms

Parents and caregivers need to know the early signs and symptoms: severe headaches, neck stiffness, high fevers, and a rash characterized by reddish/purplish spots. If these occur, immediately seek medical attention.

## Get Immunized

Immunization is the most effective way to protect yourself and those around you from meningococcal disease. Talk to your doctor, nurse, pharmacist, or local public health office to find out which vaccines are available in your area.

**For more information, visit [immunize.ca](https://immunize.ca)**

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## References

Indigenous Services Canada. (2019). Don't Wait, Vaccinate! Invasive Meningococcal Disease Fact Sheet. <https://www.sac-isc.gc.ca/eng/1572373239427/1572373295461>

Public Health Agency of Canada. (2014). Invasive Meningococcal Disease. <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/immunization/vaccine-preventable-diseases/invasive-meningococcal-disease.html>

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