

# Invasive Meningococcal Disease

## Information for close contacts

The Department of Health and Human Services has been notified of a case of invasive meningococcal disease.

### What is meningococcal disease?

Meningococcal bacteria live naturally in the back of the nose and throat of about 10 per cent of the population. There are many strains of meningococci and most cause no harm. Occasionally, however, a disease-causing meningococcal strain is passed to someone who has no immunity to these bacteria and this can result in a case of invasive meningococcal disease.

The bacteria are difficult to spread and are only passed from person to person by regular, close, prolonged contact. The bacteria die very quickly when outside the body.

### Contacts of a person with meningococcal disease

People in very close contact with a suspected or confirmed case need to take special antibiotics to clear the bacteria from the back of the throat. This may include household contacts; childcare/kindergarten contacts; those who have stayed overnight in the seven days before the case became unwell; and intimate kissing contacts or sexual partners.

People needing antibiotics are contacted directly by the Department. Clearance antibiotics do not treat meningococcal disease but may prevent disease-causing strains being passed on to others.

### Symptoms of meningococcal disease

Although the risk of contacts developing invasive meningococcal disease is extremely low, it is important to look out for the symptoms listed in the box. It may take up to 10 days for the signs of meningococcal disease to appear.

Signs and symptoms can appear very quickly and people with invasive meningococcal disease can get much worse within a few hours.

If you or someone close to you has some of these signs and appears to be much sicker than usual, seek medical attention from your doctor or nearest hospital emergency department immediately. Please take this fact sheet with you.

### Further information

Call the Public Health Hotline – Tasmania on 1800 671 738 to speak to a clinical nurse consultant.

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### Symptoms of invasive meningococcal disease

Infants and young children:

- Fever
- Refusing to take feeds
- Irritability, fretfulness, grunting or moaning
- Extreme tiredness
- Floppiness
- Dislike of being handled
- Vomiting and/or diarrhoea
- Turning away from light (photophobia)
- Convulsions or twitching
- Rash of red-purple pinprick spots or larger bruises

Older children and adults:

- Fever
- Headache
- General malaise
- Neck stiffness
- Discomfort when looking at bright lights (photophobia)
- Vomiting and/or diarrhoea
- Muscles aches
- Painful or swollen joints and/or difficulty walking
- Moaning, unintelligible speech
- Drowsiness
- Confusion
- Collapse
- Rash of red-purple pinprick spots or larger bruises