

# Meningococcal Disease

## Rifampicin information

### What is Rifampicin?

Rifampicin is an antibiotic given to very close contacts of a suspected or confirmed case of meningococcal disease.

It is given to remove meningococcal bacteria commonly found in the back of the throat to reduce the risk of disease-causing strains of the bacteria being passed on to other people.

### What you need to tell your doctor

Rifampicin is not recommended for everyone so please tell the doctor if you:

- are pregnant
- have liver disease
- are taking oral contraceptives
- have a high alcohol intake or are alcohol dependent
- are taking medication for diabetes, heart disease, asthma or epilepsy
- are taking anticoagulant (blood thinning) drugs, steroids, antiviral medicines, cyclosporines or methadone
- wear contact lenses.

### Taking antibiotics

All antibiotics carry a potential risk of allergic reactions. If you experience symptoms such as itchy skin, facial swelling or difficulty breathing you should seek urgent medical attention from the nearest hospital emergency department and consider calling an ambulance.

You should take Rifampicin twice a day for two days (a total of four doses), 12 hours apart.

You should take it on an empty stomach, at least half an hour before or at least two hours after eating.

If you have been given Rifampicin syrup for a child, when the child has completed the four doses throw away any remaining syrup.

### Symptoms of 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

## **Side effects**

Some people experience side effects such as nausea, dizziness and headache from taking Rifampicin. Rifampicin turns body fluids such as urine and tears an orange-pink colour (this stops after you have finished the course).

Avoid using soft contact lenses until you have finished these antibiotics as permanent red staining can occur.

## **Symptoms of meningococcal disease**

These antibiotics do not treat someone already incubating the disease. Although the risk of contacts developing meningococcal disease is extremely low, it is important to look out for the symptoms listed in the box. It may take up to seven days for the signs of meningococcal disease to appear.

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

You know your family and best friends better than anybody else. 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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