

## **What is *Haemophilus influenzae* type b disease?**

*Haemophilus influenzae* type b (Hib) is one of several strains of the bacteria *Haemophilus influenzae*. Although Hib can be present without causing illness, it can cause serious illnesses such as meningitis, blood infections, pneumonia, skin infections, ear infections, and infections in other parts of the body. Hib disease may result in death in 3%-6% of cases.

## **Who gets Hib disease?**

Hib is more likely to cause disease in children younger than five years of age. Before 1990, Hib typically caused over 100 cases of serious disease in young children in Oklahoma each year. Since the development of the newer Hib vaccines in 1990, the number of reported cases in children under five years of age has drastically declined. The Hib vaccine is highly effective in preventing serious disease in young children. The last case of Hib in a child under five years of age in Oklahoma was in 2009, and before that was in 1998.

## **How is Hib disease spread?**

Hib is spread from person-to-person. It is spread through contact with mucus or droplets from the nose and throat of an infected person. Coughing or sneezing can spread the Hib germs to others. It is important to use tissues or your sleeve when coughing or sneezing, and to wash hands often to prevent spread of Hib and other respiratory illnesses.

## **What are the symptoms of Hib disease?**

Persons ill with Hib disease usually have a high fever, irritability, stiff neck, stiff back, tiredness, and sometimes nausea and vomiting. The bacteria can infect different parts of the body, so other symptoms may occur. Because of the large numbers of people who have been vaccinated against Hib, less than one percent of the population carry this bacteria.

## **How long is an infected person able to spread Hib disease?**

An infected person can spread Hib disease for as long as the bacteria are present in the nose and throat, even after he/she appears to be well. A person can no longer spread the bacteria after 24 hours of treatment with an appropriate antibiotic.

## **Can a person get Hib disease again?**

Having Hib disease or the Hib vaccine protects against *Haemophilus influenzae* type b only. Infection or vaccination does not protect against other types of *Haemophilus influenzae*.

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

Antibiotics, such as rifampin and ampicillin, are used to treat Hib disease.

## **Should people who have spent time near a person infected with Hib disease receive treatment?**

When a child less than four years of age has been exposed to someone with Hib disease, they may need to take an antibiotic to prevent illness. When a person who has been exposed to Hib disease has a child less than four years of age living in their household, they may also need to take an antibiotic to prevent illness. The health department will investigate all persons with Hib and will interview to find all persons who are recommended to receive antibiotics. Persons who have had casual contact with a Hib case such as in a regular classroom, office, or factory setting usually do not need an antibiotic.

## **Should people who have been near a person infected with another type of *Haemophilus influenzae* disease receive treatment?**

No, antibiotics are not recommended for persons exposed to other types of *Haemophilus influenzae*.

## **Is there a vaccine to prevent Hib disease?**

Yes, Hib vaccination is recommended for all children starting at 2 months of age. There are several vaccines that contain Hib. You can get a Hib-containing vaccine from your healthcare provider or local health department.

