

What is *Haemophilus influenzae*?

Haemophilus influenzae (*H. influenzae*) is a cause of bacterial infections that can be severe, especially among infants. Before an effective vaccine was created, *H. influenzae* type b (Hib) used to infect one in 200 children under 5 years of age.

How is Hib spread?

Hib infection is passed from person-to-person by inhaling droplets of an infected person's mucous or coming into direct contact with it. Newborns can become infected by inhaling infected amniotic fluid (water in the sac where the baby develops) or genital tract secretions from the infected mother.

What are the signs and symptoms of Hib?

Hib infection may cause various symptoms, including meningitis, pneumonia, swelling of the throat, infections of the blood, or arthritis. Rare cases can cause swelling around the heart or bones. Bronchitis, eye or ear infections, or sinus infections can also occur.

How long after infection do symptoms appear?

It is unknown how long it takes after exposure for someone to develop Hib infection, but for invasive diseases, it may be as short as 2-4 days.

Who is most at risk?

Unimmunized children, particularly those younger than four years of age, who are in constant close contact with others who have Hib disease are most at risk. The disease is most common in children two months to three years of age, but can also occur in older children, adolescents, and adults.

What type of health problems are caused by Hib?

Invasive infections due to Hib are serious and can become deadly very fast. Hearing impairment or other neurologic problems occur in 15-30% of Hib meningitis survivors.

How is Hib diagnosed?

A healthcare provider will collect a sample of infected body fluid to do a culture test.

How is Hib treated?

There are several antibiotics available to treat the disease. Contracting Hib does not necessarily make a child immune from getting the disease again. Children with invasive Hib disease at less than 24 months of age should still receive immunizations according to the age-appropriate schedule, beginning one month after their disease began. Infected people should be isolated until 24 hours after beginning a treatment.

How can Hib be prevented?

Routine childhood vaccination is the best way to prevent Hib disease. Hib vaccine is recommended for all children younger than 5 years of age in the United States. It is usually given to infants starting at 2 months of age, with additional doses given at 4, 6 and 12-15 months of age. Good personal hygiene, such as proper handwashing, disposal of used tissues, or not sharing eating utensils, is also important.

Where can I get more information?

- Your personal healthcare provider
- Utah Department of Health, Bureau of Epidemiology, 801-538-6191
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

