

# Haemophilus Influenzae Disease



## COMMUNICABLE DISEASE CONTROL

### What is it?

Haemophilus influenzae disease is an infection with the *haemophilus influenzae* type B bacteria. It can cause cases of serious meningitis (an inflammation of the lining surrounding the brain and spinal cord). Less frequently it can be the cause of epiglottitis (a swelling of the flap that covers the windpipe during swallowing), skin infections, pneumonias and many cases of joint infections. Symptoms of meningitis can include fever, headache, stiffneck, nausea, vomiting and/or extreme tiredness. Signs may be difficulty in being aroused. Anyone who experiences these symptoms or signs should check with their doctor immediately.

### How is it transmitted?

Droplets and fluids from the nose and throat of people who carry the bacteria may transmit the infection. However, very close contact with an infected individual is necessary as it is not spread as easily as other infections such as the common cold or flu.

### How is it prevented?

HIB vaccine is a new vaccine that protects against infections from *Haemophilus influenzae* type B bacteria. All children in infancy receive this vaccine along with the routine childhood vaccinations.

Consider preventive antibiotics for close contacts when an unimmunized or underimmunized child under the age of 5 years has been exposed. (Underimmunized is defined as less than 3 doses or not up to date with immunizations.)

### Further information?

Please contact your local public health nurse or family doctor.