

## MENINGOCOCCAL DISEASE – CLIENT FACT SHEET

### WHAT IS MENINGOCOCCAL DISEASE?

Meningococcal disease is caused by a germ (a kind of bacteria) called meningococcus.

- It can cause meningitis (an infection of the lining of the brain) and meningococemia (a bloodstream infection)
- These are two serious infections that require immediate medical treatment

### WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF MENINGOCOCCAL DISEASE?

Symptoms of meningococcal disease usually start suddenly and include:

- Severe headache
- Irritability and drowsiness
- Vomiting
- Purplish, bruise-like skin rash
- High fever
- Stiff neck

### HOW IS IT SPREAD?

- The bacteria can be carried by 10% of the community at any given time and not cause any problems
- These people can be the source of infection for the few people who become ill
- It is not easy to get the disease. It is spread through direct contact with the oral or nasal secretions of the nose or mouth such as through kissing, coughing or sneezing
- The time from contact to illness can range from 1 – 10 days but is usually four days.

### HOW IS IT TREATED?

All cases must be treated in hospital with an antibiotic.

- The Community Health Nurse will identify close contacts.
- Close contacts of the patient are given an antibiotic medicine
- This antibiotic lowers the risk of getting the disease and of spreading it to others
- Any person who has been in close contact with meningococcal disease and who gets sick must be seen by a health professional immediately

### WHO ARE CLOSE CONTACTS?

- Household members
- Persons who share sleeping arrangements with the case
- Children and staff in child care and nursery school facilities
- Persons having direct contact with the secretions of the mouth or nose of the case

### HOW IS IT PREVENTED?

- Good hygiene practice such as hand washing and routine cleaning
- Cover coughs and sneezes
- Wash hands after coughing or sneezing
- Children in Newfoundland and Labrador routinely receive meningococcal vaccine at 12 months and in Grade 4
- The Community Health Nurse will advise if vaccination is necessary