



Patient Instructions: Meningococcus – instructions in case of close contact with an infected person

You have been in close contact with a person who has a diagnosed, severe meningococcus infection. Based on an assessment made by a healthcare professional, close contacts will receive prophylactic antibiotics and a meningococcal vaccine if necessary.

Information on meningococcal disease

About 5–10 percent of the population may carry the meningococcus bacteria (*Neisseria meningitidis*) temporarily in their throat. Meningococcus transmits via droplets or touch either from an asymptomatic carrier or from a person with symptoms. The bacteria spread only in close contact. A minority of infected people may develop a severe infection, such as meningitis or sepsis (bacteria growing in the blood). Severe cases are very rare.

Severe meningococcal disease starts suddenly and progresses quickly. Patients must seek treatment immediately. Symptoms of the severe disease include headache, high fever, stiff neck, sensitivity to light, decline in general health, and spot-like hematomas on the skin. The patient may also experience nausea, vomiting, or confusion.

Prophylactic antibiotics for close contacts

The risk of developing a meningococcal disease in exposed close contacts is highest during the first 7 days after the contact, but the risk remains higher than normal for a month. A healthcare professional will assess the need for prophylactic medication. Prophylactic antibiotics will be administered to people who have been in close contact with a sick person during the 10 days preceding the onset of symptoms. The aim is to administer the medication as soon as possible, preferably within 24 hours after confirming the meningococcal disease, but it can be administered even up to a month later. People who have been in contact with a close contact who has received prophylaxis do not need prophylactic medication. The medication is free of charge.

Meningococcal vaccine

In some cases, it is possible to administer the close contact a meningococcal vaccine in addition to the prophylactic antibiotics. A healthcare professional assesses if this is necessary. If the vaccine is deemed to be necessary, it will be free of charge.

Monitor your symptoms and seek treatment if you experience any.

Go to an emergency department immediately if you experience the meningococcal disease symptoms listed above. In emergencies call 112. Let the healthcare personnel know that you have been exposed to meningococcus.

Further information in Finnish

www.thl.fi Meningokokki