

Texas Education Code 38.0025 requires dissemination of information about Meningitis in school district handbooks and/or website. The following information provided by the Department of State Health Services is located in the Parent/Student Handbook

Bacterial Meningitis

What is Meningitis

Meningitis is a inflammation of the covering of the brain and spinal cord. It can be caused by viruses, parasites, fungi and bacteria. **Viral** meningitis is most common and the least serious. Bacterial meningitis is the most common form of serious bacterial infection with the potential for serious, long term complications. It is an uncommon disease but requires urgent treatment with antibiotics to prevent permanent damage or death.

What are the symptoms?

Someone with meningitis will become very ill. The illness may develop over one or two days, but it can also rapidly progress in a matter of hours. Not everyone with meningitis will have the same symptoms. Children (over one year old) and adults with meningitis may have a severe headache, high temperature, vomiting, sensitivity to bright lights, neck stiffness or joint pains, and drowsiness or confusion. In both children and adults, there may be a rash or tiny red-purple spots. These can occur anywhere on the body. The diagnosis of bacterial meningitis is based on a combination of symptoms and laboratory results.

How serious is bacterial meningitis?

If it is diagnosed early and treated properly, the majority of people make a complete recovery. In some cases it can be fatal or a person may be left with a permanent disability.

How is bacterial meningitis spread?

Fortunately, none of the bacteria that cause meningitis is as contagious as diseases like the common cold or the flu, and they are not spread by casual contact or by simply breathing the air where a person with meningitis has been. The germs live naturally in the back of our noses and throats, but they do not live for long outside the body. They are spread when people exchange saliva (such as kissing, sharing drinking containers, utensils or cigarettes). The germ **DOES NOT** cause meningitis in most people. Instead, most people become **CARRIERS** of the germ for days, weeks or even months. The bacteria rarely overcome the body's immune system and cause meningitis or another serious illness.

How can bacterial meningitis be prevented?

Do not share food, drinks, utensils, toothbrushes or cigarettes. Limit the number of person you kiss. Vaccines are now required for students entering the seventh grade and in certain situations. They can cause mild side effects, such as redness and pain at the injection site lasting up to two days. Immunity develops within 7 to 10 days after the vaccine is given.

What should you do if you think you or a friend might have bacterial meningitis?

Seek prompt medical attention.

For More Information

Your school nurse, family doctor and the staff at your local or regional health department office are excellent sources for information on all communicable diseases. You may also call your local health department or Regional Texas Department of Health office to ask about meningococcal vaccine. Additional information may also be found at websites for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: <http://www.cdc.gov> and the Texas Department of State Health Services: <http://www.dshs.state.tx.us> .