

***Haemophilus influenzae* Type b Conjugate Vaccine Information Sheet**

What is *Haemophilus influenzae* type b?

***Haemophilus influenzae* type b (Hib)** is a bacteria that can infect almost any part of the body, including the blood, joints, bones, heart or lungs. Hib is spread through droplets in the air when an infected person coughs or sneezes and the bacteria is breathed in, or by coming in contact with discharge from an infected person's nose or throat. Illnesses caused by Hib can be serious in young children. The most common of these illnesses is meningitis, infection of the covering of the brain and spinal cord. For every 20 people who get Hib meningitis, one dies. There are fewer cases of Hib disease in young children in Canada, thanks to immunization. Unfortunately Hib bacteria are still present, so it is important to keep protecting children through immunization.

How is *Haemophilus influenzae* type b spread?

***Haemophilus influenzae* type b** is spread through droplets and mucous from the respiratory tract. Hib does not survive in the environment.

What are the symptoms of *Haemophilus influenzae* type b infection?

This bacteria often causes ear, sinus and respiratory tract infections. More serious infections include the following, with associated symptoms:

- meningitis, an infection of the lining of the brain and spinal cord, resulting in complications such as mental retardation, seizures, deafness and death.
- infection of the epiglottis in the throat, causing swelling and resulting in difficulty breathing and a croup-like cough.
- arthritis in the joints, particularly in infants.
- sepsis or infection in the blood, especially with individuals without a functioning spleen
- pneumonia

How can *Haemophilus influenzae* type b be prevented?

Haemophilus influenzae type b can be prevented by getting the Hib vaccine. *Haemophilus influenzae* type b was the most common cause of meningitis caused by bacteria and a leading cause of other serious infections in young children before the introduction of Hib vaccines. Hib vaccine is given as part of the routine childhood immunization program. Immunization against Hib has led to a significant reduction in Hib disease in Canada.

Is the vaccine safe?

Yes. In Canada, all vaccines must undergo laboratory and field-testing. They must pass a rigorous licensing procedure with the federal government before they can be used. Once a vaccine has been approved for use, every lot is tested for safety and quality.

The bacteria used in Hib vaccines are killed. Therefore, a person cannot get Hib disease from the vaccine

Who should get the vaccine?

Children 2 months up to 5 years of age should receive Hib vaccine as part of their routine childhood immunization. It is most often given in combination with other vaccines containing diphtheria, tetanus pertussis and polio, at the 2, 4, 6 and 18 month immunization visits.

Others who should receive Hib vaccine include:

- candidates/recipients for solid organ transplant
- recipients of bone marrow transplants
- unimmunized individuals 5 years of age and older with specific chronic conditions who do not need vaccine in combination with diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis or polio.

Individuals who have had Hib disease and recovered should still be immunized as appropriate for age and risk factors.

Who should not get the vaccine?

Hib vaccine should not be given to people who:

- have had a severe allergic or severe unusual reaction (anaphylaxis) to this vaccine or any component of the vaccine
- are under 6 weeks of age.

What are the possible side effects to Hib vaccine?

Most people have no reactions to the vaccine. Reactions that do occur are typically mild. They usually occur within 6 to 12 hours after the immunization and commonly disappear within 24 to 48 hours.

Possible reactions include:

- redness, pain and swelling where the needle was given
- fever
- loss of appetite, nausea and diarrhea
- headache, irritability, aching muscles and tiredness
- prolonged or abnormal crying

As with any immunization, unexpected or unusual side effects can occur including a severe allergic reaction (anaphylaxis).

What should you do if you have a reaction?

- Apply a cool moist cloth to the area where the needle was given to reduce the pain and swelling.
- Take a medication such as acetaminophen (e.g. Tylenol® to reduce the pain or if a fever develops).
 - Aspirin® (ASA) is not recommended for individuals under 19 years of age.
- Report any unusual reactions to Health Link Alberta.

Where can I get the Hib immunization?

Hib vaccine is offered as part of the routine childhood immunization program through public health.

For health advice and information 24 hours a day, seven days a week, call **Health Link Alberta** at

- 403-943-5465 in Calgary
- 780-408-5465 in Edmonton
- Toll free 1-866-408-5465 elsewhere in Alberta

Or visit www.MyHealth.Alberta.ca for health information online.

This material is designed for information purposes only. It should not be used in place of medical advice, instruction and/or treatment. If you have specific questions please consult your doctor or appropriate healthcare professional.