



January 2011

Haemophilus influenzae type b

Haemophilus influenzae type b

Haemophilus influenzae type b (Hib) is a type of bacteria that can cause serious illness, especially in children less than five years old, children in daycare, aboriginal children, and immune suppressed people. Prior to a Hib vaccine becoming available in 1988, this bacteria was the most common cause of bacterial meningitis (infection of the lining of the brain and spinal cord), epiglottitis (a form of croup which can threaten a child's breathing), and pneumonia (infection of the lungs) in young children. About five per cent of children who became infected with Hib died, and 10 to 20 per cent of children who survived experienced permanent damage such as deafness or brain damage. Fortunately, the occurrence of serious Hib infection is now uncommon in Canada due to universal immunization.

Despite its name, *Haemophilus influenzae* type b is not related to influenza or the flu.

Symptoms of Hib infection

Symptoms develop between two and four days after becoming infected with the bacteria and vary depending upon the part of the body affected.

- Hib meningitis:** Symptoms can include fever, vomiting, drowsiness, headache, bulging fontanelle (soft spot on a baby's head) in infants, stiff neck and back in older children
- Hib pneumonia:** Symptoms can include chest pain, coughing, chills, fever, difficulty breathing, coughing up green phlegm, sweating
- Hib epiglottitis:** Symptoms can include swelling of the epiglottis, sudden onset of fever, sore throat, difficulty breathing, difficulty swallowing, drooling

How Hib spreads

Hib spreads from person to person through inhaling or having direct contact with the respiratory droplets from an infected person's mouth, nose and throat.

For further information, please call:
York Region Health Connection 1-800-361-5653
TTY 1-866-252-9933 or visit www.york.ca