

# Fact Sheet

## *Haemophilus influenzae* (Hi), Invasive

### **What is *Haemophilus influenzae* disease?**

*Haemophilus Influenzae* (Hi) is bacteria that cause serious infections. Hi can infect the throat and then can spread to cause meningitis (an infection of the lining of the brain and spinal cord), pneumonia (a serious infection of the lungs), or ear, skin, joint or blood infections.

### **What are the symptoms of Hi disease?**

Symptoms depend on the part of the body that collects the bacteria. Symptoms of meningitis may include fever, stiff neck, headache and/or pain when looking into bright lights. In babies, meningitis may cause poor eating and drinking, and throwing up.

Symptoms of pneumonia may include fever, difficulty or very quick breathing, cough and/or chest pain.

### **Who can get it?**

Although Hi can occur at any age, babies and children younger than 5 years old are most often the ones who get sick.

### **How does a person get it?**

It is spread through touching liquid from the nose or mouth of someone with the illness, through kissing, or sharing food, forks, spoons, knives/ulus or drinking glasses.

### **What is the treatment for it?**

Antibiotics can be used to treat it; it is important to take the medicine as soon as possible. Your health care provider will decide which antibiotic is best to treat the disease.

### **How can it be prevented?**

- There is a safe vaccine available for some types of Hi. Hi type b (Hib) vaccine is recommended for all children in Nunavut. Talk to your healthcare provider and make sure that your child's vaccines are up to date.
- Wash your hands often, cough and sneeze into a tissue or your elbow or sleeve.
- Try not to share food, drinks, smokes, forks, spoons, or toothbrushes.
- Some adults with another illness or taking certain medicine may be at risk for Hi disease. Speak with your healthcare provider to see if you can do more to protect yourself.
- Contacts of a person who is ill with Hi type b disease may be offered antibiotics to prevent them from getting sick. This is decided on a case by case basis.