

BACTERIAL MENINGITIS

Caused by *Streptococcal pneumoniae*

PERSONAL HEALTH FACT SHEET

Streptococcus pneumoniae is a bacterium commonly found in the nose and throat. The bacterium can sometimes cause severe illness in children, the elderly and other people with weakened immune systems. *Streptococcus pneumoniae* is the most common cause of ear infections (otitis media), sepsis (blood infection) in children as well as pneumonia in immunocompromised individuals and the elderly. *Streptococcus pneumoniae* is considered "invasive" when it is found in the blood, spinal fluid or other normally sterile site, causing **Bacterial Meningitis**

How does a person get *Streptococcal pneumoniae*?

Many people carry the bacteria in their airways without becoming ill. *Streptococcus pneumoniae* is spread from person to person by the inhalation of respiratory droplets (e.g. coughing, sneezing) from an infected person. It is not known why certain individuals develop invasive *Streptococcus pneumoniae* disease while others do not.

How is *Streptococcus pneumoniae* diagnosed and treated?

Invasive *Streptococcus pneumoniae* is diagnosed when the bacterium is grown from cultures of sterile body fluids, such as the blood or spinal fluid. Invasive *Streptococcus pneumoniae* can cause blood infections and meningitis (inflammation of the lining of the brain).

Invasive *Streptococcus pneumoniae* infections are treated with antibiotics. There is an increasing problem of *Streptococcus pneumoniae* bacteria developing drug resistance due to the overuse and misuse of antibiotics.

Can invasive *Streptococcus pneumoniae* disease be prevented?

There is a "pneumococcal" vaccine that can help to prevent invasive *Streptococcus pneumoniae* infections. The vaccine is currently recommended for people that are immunocompromised, or over the age of 65. Recently the vaccine was also approved for use in children under two years of age.

The best way to prevent the spread of the bacteria is by covering your mouth when coughing or sneezing, as well as frequent and thorough handwashing.

SYMPTOMS OF BACTERIAL MENINGITIS CAUSED BY *Streptococcal pneumoniae*

The onset of this disease is very sudden with symptoms of:

- ◆ High Fever
- ◆ Headache
- ◆ Lethargy
- ◆ Coma

This disease has a high fatality rate.



DICKINSON-IRON DISTRICT HEALTH DEPARTMENT
www.didhd.org

818 Pyle Drive
Kingsford, MI 49802
(906) 774 1868

601 Washington Avenue
Iron River, MI 49935
(906) 265 9913