

January 19, 2024

## Public Health Alert – Increases in Invasive Meningococcal Disease Seen in Manitoba

### Situation

On January 11, 2024, Manitoba Public Health reported an increase in secondary bacterial infections associated with increased circulating viral respiratory infections. Eight cases of invasive meningococcal disease (IMD) have been identified since December 21, 2023. Of these cases, 6 have been among adults and the other 2 in children under 5 years of age. There were no identified epidemiological links identified between the cases. The predominant serogroup has been W135, with one B serogroup also identified. Further results related to strain identification are pending.

The last reported case of IMD in the Northwestern Health Unit (NWHU) catchment area was in July 2023. With the close connections with our area, it is important to be vigilant for possible IMD cases

### Issue

IMD is a bacterial infection that manifests as meningitis, meningococemia, or both. Invasive disease may progress rapidly to purpura fulminans, shock, and death. It is crucial that early diagnosis and treatment with appropriate antibiotics occur to reduce the severity of illness and prevent fatalities.

While IMD is rare, it is commonly seen during increased transmission of viral respiratory infections, such as Influenza, RSV, or COVID-19. Consider IMD as a possible cause of severe illness in children and adults if symptoms persist or worsen, following initial improvement.

### Actions Requested

- Report to NWHU any suspected or confirmed [Disease of Public Health Significance](#). Cases of IMD need to be reported on the same day to NWHU. After hours reporting is available 24/7 at 866-475-6505.
- Follow current testing guidance [Test Information Index | Public Health Ontario](#). The gold standard for diagnosis is specimens from a sterile site, primarily CSF or blood, but can be from another sterile site.
- Remain vigilant for signs and symptoms of IMD among your patients. If the patient had a previous respiratory illness, consider IMD if symptoms are worsening.
- Educate patients, especially those at increased risk, on the signs and symptoms of serious infections and when to seek urgent medical attention.



**Northwestern  
Health Unit**

[www.nwhu.on.ca](http://www.nwhu.on.ca)

- Promote routine vaccinations based on the [Publicly Funded Immunization Schedules for Ontario \(June 2022\)](#) including Meningococcal, Influenza, COVID-19, and RSV for eligible patients.
- Be aware of and support immunization for high-risk patients in relation to IMD
  - HIV; asplenia; cochlear implant recipients (pre/post implant); acquired complement deficiencies; complement, properdin factor D or primary antibody deficiencies
- Begin treatment early with appropriate antibiotics to reduce the severity of illness and to prevent fatalities.

### **Resources**

- [Ontario Case Definitions and Disease Specific Information for Meningococcal disease, invasive.](#)
- [Manitoba Health Communication to health care providers.](#)

### **Contact**

Dr. Kit Young Hoon  
Medical Officer of Health  
Northwestern Health Unit