



PUZZLE 6

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WHAT TO DO FOR PEOPLE WHO HAVE BEEN IN CONTACT WITH A PERSON INFECTED WITH MENINGOCOCCUS?

Who is considered a contact case?

A contact case is a person who has been directly exposed to the nasopharyngeal secretions (essentially, droplets or spit projections) of an infected patient within the ten days preceding their hospitalisation.

Why 10 days?

The contagious period for meningococcus can begin up to 10 days before the first symptoms appear. If the last contact with the patient occurred less than 10 days ago, there is a risk of having been infected.

WHY CAN AN INFECTED PATIENT BE CONTAGIOUS BEFORE SHOWING SYMPTOMS?

This is because there is a slight delay between infection and the body's reaction to the germ (which causes the symptoms): this is the germ's incubation period.

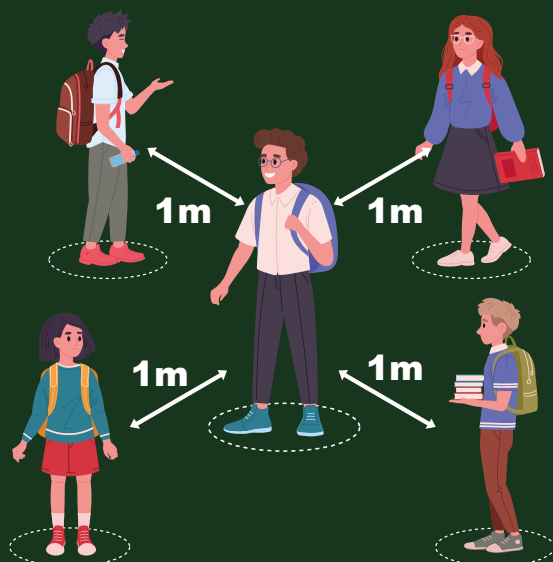
The incubation period is the time between the day of infection and the day symptoms appear.

For meningococcus, this incubation period ranges from 1 to 10 days, most often 4 days. During incubation, the germ can be transmitted without the person realising it. This is the case with many infectious diseases.

DISTANCE AND DURATION

Transmission by droplets requires close contact of less than 1 metre face to face. The shorter the distance, the greater the risk of transmission.

The probability of transmission of the germ also increases with the duration of the exchange.



WHAT SHOULD BE DONE WHEN A CONTACT HAS BEEN IDENTIFIED?

To reduce the risk of developing a meningococcal infection in a contact case, an antibiotic effective against meningococcus must be given as quickly as possible.

Ideally, treatment should begin within 24 to 48 hours after the contact. It is no longer useful if the last contact occurred more than 10 days ago (because, as mentioned earlier, if the contact were going to develop symptoms, they would have appeared within 10 days. After 10 days, we can be reassured that the person is not infected).

In some situations, vaccination against meningococcus may also be recommended. This depends on the person's vaccination status and age.