Meningitis
HOME CARE INSTRUCTIONS

Meningitis is an infection of the cerebral spinal fluid and the meninges, which is the tissue around the brain and spinal cord. Meningitis can be caused by a viral, bacterial, or fungal infection. For example, an ear infection or respiratory infection can cause meningitis. Anyone can get meningitis, but it is more common in infants and young children.

Signs of meningitis
- headache
- fever
- stiff neck
- high pitched cry
- vomiting
- unable to tolerate bright lights
- irritability
- decreased appetite
- the soft spot on the head, called the fontanel, seems swollen
- confusion
- the child does not seem to want to wake up
- rash

Treatment for meningitis
To treat meningitis the doctor will place a needle in your child's back to get some spinal fluid for testing. This is called a lumbar puncture. The test will determine whether your child actually has meningitis and whether the meningitis is bacterial, viral, or fungal. The doctors need to know the type in order to treat it most effectively. As a precaution, your child will be given antibiotics.

You should be aware that you and anyone around your child will be wearing a mask, gloves and gown. This is because meningitis can be very contagious. A special team called the Infectious Disease Team will become involved in your child's care, along with the doctors and nurses in the PCCU.

When the test results come back, the antibiotics will be stopped if the meningitis is viral, as antibiotics do not work on viral infections. If the spinal results come back as bacterial or fungal, the antibiotics will be continued. If your child has bacterial meningitis, the Infectious Disease Team is required by law to notify the Public Health Department in the county where you live. People who have been near the child will be notified by the Public Health Department to take steps to prevent infection.

To prevent meningitis
The best way to prevent the spread of any disease is to wash your hands! However, vaccinations are available and are vital to help maintain the health of children and those around them.
Today the HIB vaccine (Haemophilus influenza type B) is used to immunize children against this disease. It is very effective.

**Remember**
Meningitis is a serious disease. Parents and caregivers need to protect themselves. For more information on meningitis, please contact the Center for Disease Control at www.cdc.gov or ask your nurse for more information. We are here to help you in any way we can.