

Rifampicin

An antibiotic for contacts of a person with meningococcal disease

There are **three** fact sheets for meningococcal disease:

- a general fact sheet ("*Meningococcal Disease*"),
- a fact sheet for people who are close contacts of someone with the disease ("*Meningococcal Disease – Information for close contacts who require antibiotics*"),
- and this fact sheet about rifampicin.

This fact sheet should be read in combination with the other two fact sheets.

Why is it recommended that I take rifampicin?

It has been recommended that you take an antibiotic called rifampicin, which can be given to people who have been in close contact with a person who has meningococcal disease. The purpose of taking this antibiotic is to get rid of any meningococcal bacteria being 'carried' in the nose and throat of contacts and therefore help prevent the disease from spreading to others.

IMPORTANT: Rifampicin given to close contacts is not the same as treatment given to people with meningococcal disease. So even though you have been recommended this antibiotic, it may not stop you from developing meningococcal disease. It is important to monitor for symptoms of the disease, as outlined in the meningococcal disease fact sheet, and seek urgent medical attention if symptoms occur.

How is rifampicin taken?

Rifampicin is taken twice a day for 2 days (a total of 4 doses). The dosage will vary according to your age. It is important to take all the antibiotics that you are prescribed. Rifampicin should be taken either half an hour before or 2 hours after food.

IMPORTANT

Oral contraceptive pill: Rifampicin can reduce the effectiveness of the oral contraceptive pill, and some other medications. Additional barrier contraception should be used while taking rifampicin and for four weeks after the last dose of rifampicin. Please discuss this further with your treating health professional who may recommend an alternative.

Other medications: Before you start taking rifampicin, it is important to tell your treating health professional and pharmacist if you are taking **any** medications. This includes herbal and over-the-counter products (e.g. antacids) and prescribed medications (e.g. anticoagulants such as warfarin, steroids, several medicines for heart disease, medicines to control diabetes, medicines for epilepsy or asthma, methadone, antiviral medicine, antidepressants and cyclosporin).

Are there any side effects to rifampicin?

Common side effects of rifampicin include:

- Orange colouration of urine, tears, saliva and sweat, which is harmless and stops when the medication is discontinued. Please note that rifampicin can permanently stain soft contact lenses so they should not be used during treatment.
- Headache, dizziness or drowsiness.
- Gastrointestinal disturbance, such as nausea and vomiting.
- A **very** uncommon side effect is allergic reaction to rifampicin (e.g. facial swelling, breathing difficulties, or rash). If this occurs, you should seek **immediate** medical attention.

Who should not take rifampicin?

Rifampicin should not be taken by people who:

- are pregnant;
- have jaundice and/or severe liver disease;
- are taking certain medications (talk to your health professional); or
- have a known allergy to rifampicin.

Need more information?

For more information about meningococcal disease, contact your doctor or call the Health Protection Service, Communicable Disease Control Information Line during business hours on **(02) 6205 2155**.

Communicable Disease Control Section at Health Protection Service is responsible for the investigation and surveillance of notifiable or infectious conditions in the ACT in order to control or prevent their spread in the community. This includes the promotion of immunisation, education and other strategies that help to limit the spread of diseases.

Acknowledgement

1. Australian Government, Department of Health, Invasive Meningococcal Disease SoNG 2014 (revised March 2017). Available at:
<http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/content/cdna-song-imd.htm>

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