

Quick Facts on Bacterial Meningitis

- *Haemophilus influenzae* type b (Hib), *Streptococcus pneumoniae* and *Neisseria meningitidis* causes life-threatening meningitis in children under 5, with the majority of cases occurring in children under 2 years of age.
- Life-threatening meningitis causes 125,000 deaths each year in infants and young children mostly occurring in developing countries.¹
- More than half of all children contracting meningitis die or are left with lifelong disabilities including paralysis, deafness, mental retardation, and learning disabilities.
- Hib and Pneumococcus are the leading causes of bacterial meningitis in children under 5 years of age and are often drastically underestimated by routine surveillance.
- Routine Hib, Pneumococcal and Meningococcal (*N. meningitidis*) vaccination programs could prevent the majority of bacterial meningitis deaths and disability in children under 5.
- WHO recommends that Hib vaccines be included in all routine infant immunization programs. As of March 2007, WHO also recommends countries make inclusion of pneumococcal vaccines in national routine immunization programs a priority.²⁻³

References

1. Fuller DG, Duke T, Shann F, Curtis N. Antibiotic treatment for bacterial meningitis in children in developing countries. *Annals of tropical pediatrics*. Dec. 2003; 23(4):255-7.
2. WHO Position paper on Pneumococcal conjugate vaccines *Weekly Epidemiological Review*, 23 March, 2007
3. WHO Position paper on *Haemophilus influenzae* type b conjugate vaccines. *Weekly Epidemiological Record*, Nov 24, 2006; 47 (81) 445-52. <<http://www.who.int/wer>>