What is meningococcal disease?
Meningococcal diseases are rare infections caused by a bacteria called meningococcus. The infection may be in the lining of the brain and spinal cord and called meningitis. Or, the infection may be in the blood and called meningococcemia (or septicemia).

What are the symptoms of meningococcal disease?
Symptoms may include: fever, severe headache, chills, stiff neck, confusion, nausea, vomiting, joint or muscle pain and sometimes a red or purple rash.

When do symptoms appear?
Symptoms appear from two-to-ten days (usually three-to-four days) after a person is exposed to the bacteria.

How is it spread?
The bacteria is spread by contact with fluid from the nose, mouth and throat of an infected person. It normally requires very close contact to be spread from person to person.

What is the contagious period?
As long as the bacteria is present in the nose, mouth and throat. Treatment with antibiotics can get rid of these bacteria.

Who can catch it?
Anyone can get this disease, but only a very few people will actually get sick. Many people carry this germ in their nose or throat and are not sick. However, they can still pass it to others. People who live with an infected person are more likely to get the bacteria. About 10-20 cases occur in Idaho each year.

How can this disease be prevented?
By not sharing eating and drinking utensils, cigarettes, lipstick, food, sports water bottles or other items that may have saliva on them. You should cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when coughing or sneezing; then the tissue should be discarded. Some strains of meningococcal disease can be prevented by receiving the meningococcal vaccine.

What is the treatment?
Meningococcal disease can be cured with antibiotics. It is important for someone with this disease to see a doctor or go to the emergency room as soon as possible.

Where can I get more information?
You can call your physician or local health department for more information about meningococcal disease. Or visit the CDC website at: www.cdc.gov/meningococcal