

Bacterial Meningitis is a central nervous system disease caused by certain types of bacteria. Meningitis is characterized by inflammation of the membranes (meninges) around the brain or spinal cord. Inflammation can begin suddenly (acute) or develop gradually (subacute). Major symptoms may include fever, headache, and a stiff neck, sometimes with aching muscles. Nausea, vomiting and other symptoms may occur. In the United States, approximately 2,600 sporadic cases of Bacterial Meningitis are reported each year. Meningitis caused by pneumococcal infections affects about 1.1 in 100,000 individuals. Meningitis caused by haemophilus influenza affects about .2 in 100,000 individuals. About 70 percent of all Bacterial Meningitis occurs in children aged 5 and under. Children under age 2 are at highest risk for infection, and males are affected more often than females. Bacterial Meningitis in general occurs most often during the first month of a newborn's life and is usually caused by gram-negative bacteria such as Escherichia coli or by group B streptococcus. Bacterial Meningitis caused by Hemophilus influenzae type B occurs most often in infants over 1 month old and young children. However, in the United States, this type of Bacterial Meningitis occurs more often in adults as a result of a vaccine that has led to a decline in the number of affected infants and children. Bacterial Meningitis caused by pneumococcus bacteria occurs most often in adults, but there are an estimated 1,400 cases of pneumococcal meningitis each year among children under age five. Testing for Bacterial Meningitis may include imaging techniques such as CT scans or MR imaging. Other testing may include examination of the patient's blood and/or skin. Diagnosis is made by examination of the cerebrospinal fluid.