



A DAY TO STEP UP THE FIGHT AGAINST MENINGITIS, A RAPIDLY PROGRESSIVE AND POTENTIALLY DEADLY DISEASE

India, 21st April 2016: Meningitis Day is a World day, observed every 24th of April to raise awareness about meningitis, including meningococcal meningitis – a devastating disease that can cause death in 24 hours. ¹

Meningitis is a serious infection that affects the protective layer around the brain and spinal cord.² Meningitis can be caused by viruses, bacteria and fungi.² **One of the common and dangerous forms of meningitis is meningococcal meningitis:** it is caused by the bacterium called *Neisseria Meningitidis* that can also cause bloodstream infection (sepsis).^{2,3}

Meningococcal meningitis is a major cause of illness globally. The annual number of invasive meningococcal disease cases worldwide is estimated to be 1.2 million with 135,000 deaths related to it .⁴

Meningococcal disease may be rapidly progressive and can lead to death in 24 hours.^{1,3} Even with appropriate treatment, 10% of patients who get meningococcal meningitis may die.^{3,9} If the infection progresses to the blood stream, death

An Indian study suggests that in approximately **85% of children suffering from bacterial meningitis, a causative organism is not identified.** ⁵ Despite these challenges in diagnosing meningococcal meningitis (MM), baseline cases have been regularly reported at Government hospitals and private setups in the Country.

As per the National Health Profile report published by the Central Bureau of Health Intelligence, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Government of India, there have been more than 27000 cases and more than 1500 death due to Meningococcal Meningitis since 2010 .⁶

India has also seen several outbreaks in the last 30 years in cities such as Delhi (1985-88, 2005-08), Meghalaya (2008-09), Tripura (2009), Gujarat (1985-87), erstwhile Andhra Pradesh (1989) and Madhya Pradesh (1989) to name a few.^{7,8}

rate can be up to 40%.^{3,9} Moreover, about 20% of the survivors may suffer life-long injuries such as amputation of limbs, severe scarring, mental retardation, epilepsy and hearing loss.^{3,9}

The complex aspect of meningitis is that early symptoms could be similar to those of influenza (flu) such as fever, headache, nausea and vomiting, irritability, sore throat or decreased appetit.¹ which makes early diagnosis challenging. Specific symptoms such as hemorrhagic rash, neck pain and stiffness and photophobia are delayed and when they appear, the disease is already at an advanced stage.¹ Late symptoms such as confusion, delirium, seizure or unconsciousness can occur fast and may lead to death.¹ So when it comes to treating this potentially deadly disease, early detection is essential.^{2,10,11}

Meningococcal meningitis affects mainly the young population, and especially children below 5 years of age.^{12,13} Because the bacteria responsible for the disease are transmitted from person-to-person through droplets of respiratory or throat secretions from carriers¹⁴, high-density/crowded populations such as Hajj pilgrims, dormitory students or military recruits are also at increased risk.^{15,16}

Since meningococcal meningitis is an unpredictable disease that can also affect otherwise healthy people in a very short time, speak to your healthcare provider for more information on disease and its prevention.

About Sanofi

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