



Meningococcal Disease

February 20, 2026

While there have been no reported cases of invasive meningococcal disease (IMD) in Winnebago County, the Chicago Department of Public Health identified ten (10) cases of IMD caused by *Neisseria meningitidis* infection resulting in two (2) deaths. Forty percent of the IMD cases were identified in unhoused individuals residing in a shelter.

Clinicians should have a high degree of clinical suspicion for individuals who are at higher risk for the disease and present for care with symptoms of IMD. Rapid treatment of the underlying cause of IMD can prevent complications.

Risk factors include:

- Unvaccinated
- Living in congregate housing such as shelters and dorms
- Sickle cell disease
- Functional and anatomic asplenia
- HIV infection with a low CD4 count
- Infants less than one year of age
- Teens and young adults ages 16 through 23 years of age
- Adults 65 and over
- Taking complement inhibitor medications such as eculizumab and ravulizumab
- Traveled to sub-Saharan Africa

Common **meningitis (IMD) symptoms** include

- Fever
- Headache
- Stiff neck
- Nausea
- Skin rash
- Fatigue
- Joint and/or muscle pain
- Vomiting
- Photophobia
- Altered mental status (confusion)

Suspect or confirmed cases of IMD should be promptly isolated and reported to the Winnebago County Health Department at **815.720.4050** to reduce the risk of transmission.

For more information on IMD, please see the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) or the [Cleveland Clinic](#).