



Australian Government

**Australian Institute of
Health and Welfare**

Hib disease in Australia

Quick facts

Hib disease has been less common in Australia since vaccination was introduced.

Although Hib infection is now rare, it can cause serious illness, hospitalisation and death.

What is Hib?

Haemophilus influenzae type b (Hib) disease is caused by bacteria commonly found in the nose and throat of some people, most of whom remain healthy. They can be spread by droplets made by coughing and sneezing.

The most severe Hib infections include the membranes around the brain and spinal cord (meningitis), or part of the throat (epiglottitis) as well as other parts of the body such as the lungs (pneumonia).

Hib is most dangerous in infants and young children.

Vaccination against Hib

Vaccination against Hib was first included in the Australian National Immunisation Program (NIP) in 1993. Hib vaccination is available in the NIP for infants and young children.

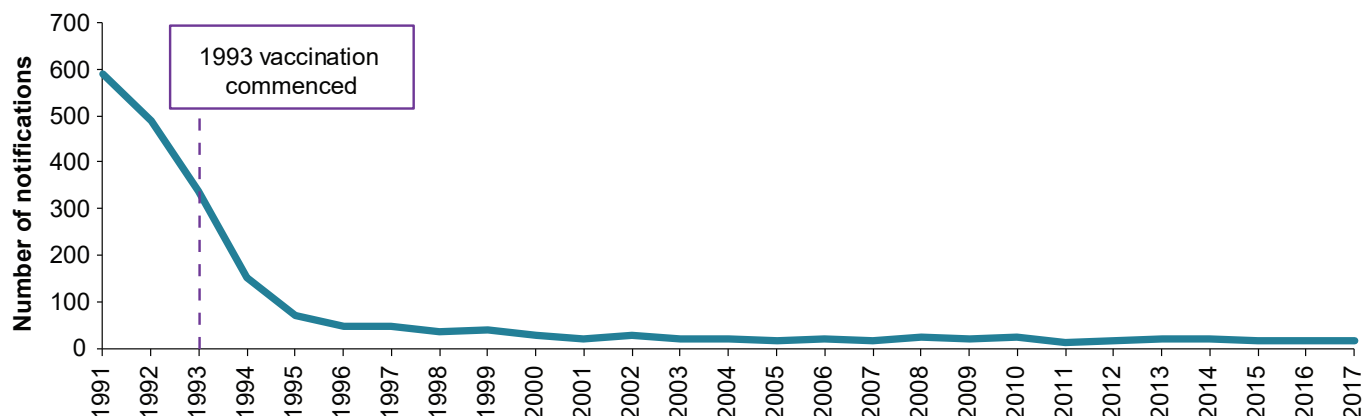
Although Hib infection is now rare in Australia, immunisation is still important. The vaccine protects the vaccinated person and also helps protect others, by reducing the number of people with the bacteria in their upper respiratory tract.

In 2017, 94.5% of Australian 1 year olds were fully vaccinated against Hib; however, vaccination rates vary by where a child lives.

Hib notifications

The invasive form of *Haemophilus influenzae* type b is a nationally notifiable disease in Australia, which means that diagnosed cases of Hib are reported to state or territory health departments.

There were 16 notifications of Hib in Australia in 2017. The notification rate dropped significantly after vaccination commenced in 1993. Over the 3-year period 2014–2016, 17% of Hib notifications were among Indigenous Australians.



Note: Hib was not notifiable in Western Australia until 1994.

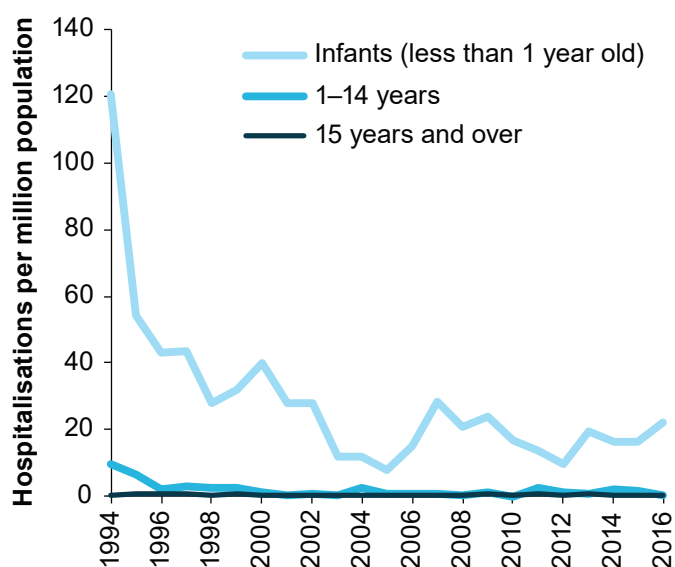
Source: AIHW analysis of NNDSS data extracted on 06 August 2018.

Hospitalisations and deaths due to Hib

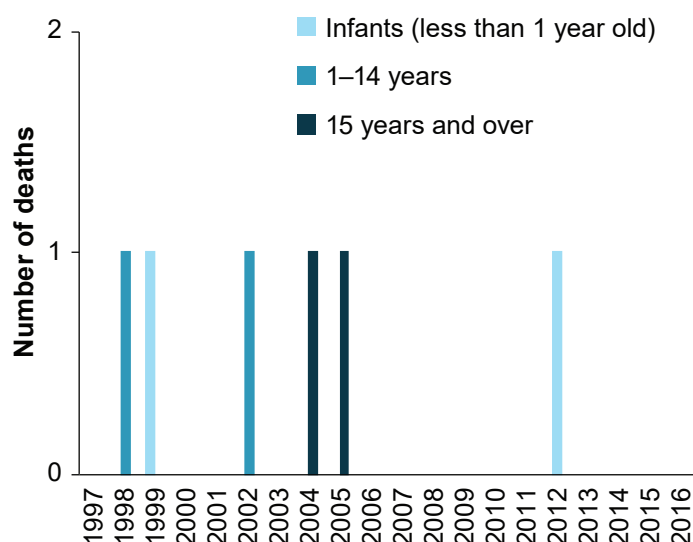
Between 1994 and 2016, there were 503 hospital admissions for Hib meningitis in Australia, of which over one third (35%) were for children aged under 1 year. Hospitalisation rates are highest among children aged under 1 year (left figure).

Deaths due to meningitis caused by Hib are now rare. Between 1997 and 2016, Hib meningitis caused 6 deaths in Australia; 2 in infants, 2 in children aged 1-14 and 2 in people aged 15 years and over (right figure).

Data are not available about the number of deaths or hospitalisations arising from Hib infections for illnesses other than meningitis.



Source: AIHW analysis of National Hospital Morbidity Database.



Source: AIHW analysis of National Mortality Database.

This fact sheet is part of the [Vaccine-preventable diseases](#) release. For more information see [Immunisation](#) on the AIHW website.

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