

Complications of Meningitis

“Most people who get meningitis...survive, often without any after effects, but sometimes these diseases cause a range of disabilities and problems that can alter people’s lives. After effects may be temporary or permanent, physical or emotional.”¹

Sometimes, “the complications of meningitis can be severe. The longer you or your child has the disease without treatment, the greater the risk of seizures and permanent neurological damage.”² Fortunately, many problems improve and disappear over time.

Some of the complications most likely to be caused by meningitis include:

- hearing problems (deafness, hearing loss, tinnitus, dizziness, loss of balance);
- changes in sight, blindness;
- memory difficulty (memory loss, difficulty retaining information, lack of concentration);
- clumsiness, coordination problems;
- residual headache;
- speech problems, loss of speech;
- learning disabilities (ranging from temporary learning deficiencies to long-term mental impairment);
- behavior problems;
- brain damage;
- weakness, paralysis, or spasms of part of the body (if permanent, sometimes called cerebral palsy).^{1,2}

“Other complications may include:

- kidney failure,
- adrenal gland failure,
- shock, and
- death.”²

“Fortunately, early diagnosis and treatment can keep damage to a minimum.”³

Sources:

1. Meningitis Foundation of America (2011). After effects of meningitis [online]. Retrieved January 10, 2011. From <http://www.meningitisfoundationofamerica.org/templates/section-view/23/index.html>.
2. Mayo Clinic (2010). Meningitis [online]. Retrieved December 22, 2010. From <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/meningitis/DS00118>.
3. The Patient Education Institute (2008). X-plain meningitis: Reference summary [online]. Retrieved January 13, 2011. From <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/tutorials/meningitis/nr219103.pdf>.

