

Protecting Progress Against Hib with Continued Vaccination and Monitoring

***Haemophilus influenzae* type b, or Hib, was once a major cause of severe and life-threatening illness in children.¹ Today, it has been nearly eliminated in the U.S. due to routine and highly effective vaccines – but declining vaccination rates and emerging cases raise concerns this progress may be reversed.²**

HIB IS A SERIOUS BACTERIAL INFECTIOUS DISEASE

Hib is a contagious bacterial infection that can affect the lungs, brain, spinal cord and bloodstream and is spread through respiratory droplets from coughing, sneezing and close contact.³ While early symptoms may be low grade fever – the disease can quickly progress and lead to severe and life-threatening conditions, including meningitis, pneumonia and sepsis – particularly among young children.^{4,5}

Before Hib vaccines became widely available in 1987, the U.S. saw around 20,000 cases annually, primarily among children younger than age five – with about 1,000 children dying each year.

HIB VACCINATION PROTECTS CHILDREN

The introduction of Hib vaccines in the 1980s transformed disease outcomes for children. For decades, Hib vaccines have been recommended for all children younger than five years old* – saving countless young children from devastating disease.^{9,10} Thanks to these vaccines, the U.S. has seen:

99% Decline in Hib incidence since the vaccine's introduction ¹¹	Fewer than 50 Annual Hib cases in the U.S. (on average) ¹²	An estimated 1.4M Lives saved globally (based on data from 2000-2011) ¹³
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Moreover, the benefits of Hib vaccination far outweigh any rare risks, supported by extensive clinical testing and ongoing safety monitoring across millions of doses administered worldwide.¹⁴

Prior to vaccination, Hib was the leading cause of bacterial meningitis in infants.⁶ Meningitis – a serious bacterial infection – can lead to long-term complications, including blindness, deafness, mental disabilities, learning disabilities and death.⁷ Patients with Hib-resultant meningitis face serious health risks:⁸



10–15%
of cases result in severe neurological disorders



10–15%
of survivors experience deafness



5%
of cases result in death



ARTICLE:

A deadly bacterial disease is returning, doctors warn, as vaccination rates fall

NBC News | April 2, 2026

BUT PROGRESS IS AT RISK AND EXPERTS ARE SOUNDING THE ALARM ABOUT RISING CASES NATIONWIDE AS VACCINATION RATES DECLINE.



According to CDC data, rates of vaccination coverage have declined across several routinely recommended childhood vaccines among children born during 2021–2022 – including Hib, with coverage now at approximately 77% – well below the 90% rate needed to keep children healthy and prevent outbreaks.^{16,17}



Recent cases – including hospitalizations, severe complications and at least one death in an unvaccinated infant – highlight the risks of declining immunization, particularly for children most vulnerable to serious disease.¹⁸



Experts warn that falling vaccination rates and reporting delays may allow infections to spread undetected.¹⁹

- Hib data reporting can be delayed by a year or more, as states typically submit these cases at a slower rate compared to data submission for acute outbreaks like measles or flu, meaning current case counts likely underestimate ongoing transmission.
- Further, the current incidence of Hib is likely underreported, as recent changes to federal health agencies have decreased federal surveillance and reporting of vaccine-preventable diseases.²⁰

Preventing a return of Hib starts with maintaining high vaccination rates and strong public health systems. **Routine childhood vaccinations will have prevented approximately 508 million lifetime cases of illness, 32 million hospitalizations, and 1,129,000 deaths, at a net savings of \$540 billion in direct costs and \$2.7 trillion in societal costs.**²¹

It is critical that policymakers take steps to support vaccination, strengthen surveillance and ensure families have access to credible, evidence-driven information so they can make informed decisions and protect their children without barriers.

**CDC recommends Hib vaccination for all children younger than 5 years old. Children younger than 5 years old need multiple Hib shots, recommended at 2 months, 4 months, 6 months (depending on the vaccine) and sometime from 12-15 months.*

¹ <https://www.nih.gov/sites/default/files/2025-01/childhood-hib-vaccines-case-study.pdf>

² <https://www.nbcnews.com/health/health-news/bacterial-disease-hib-doctors-warn-rising-vaccination-rates-drop-rcna265851>

³ <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/imz-schedules/child-easyread.html>

⁴ <https://www.cdc.gov/hi-disease/symptoms/index.html>

⁵ <https://historyofvaccines.org/diseases/hib-haemophilus-influenzae-type-b/>

⁶ <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/20610819/>

⁷ <https://www.emro.who.int/health-topics/haemophilus-influenzae-type-b/disease-burden.html>

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ <https://www.nih.gov/sites/default/files/2025-01/childhood-hib-vaccines-case-study.pdf>

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ <https://www.cdc.gov/pinkbook/hcp/table-of-contents/chapter-8-haemophilus-influenzae.html>

¹² <https://www.cdc.gov/hi-disease/vaccines/types.html>

¹³ <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC8482018/>

¹⁴ <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccine-safety/vaccines/hib.html>

¹⁵ <https://substack.com/home/post/p-190095908>

¹⁶ <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/75/wr/mm7511a2.htm>

¹⁷ <https://www.chop.edu/vaccine-update-healthcare-professionals/newsletter/hib-fast-facts-healthcare-providers>

¹⁸ <https://substack.com/home/post/p-190095908>

¹⁹ <https://www.nbcnews.com/health/health-news/bacterial-disease-hib-doctors-warn-rising-vaccination-rates-drop-rcna265851>

²⁰ <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jama-health-forum/fullarticle/2840162>

²¹ <https://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2024/s0812-vs-vfc.html>