What is meningococcal disease?
Meningococcal disease is an illness which can be caused by a bacterium called Neisseria meningitidis. Five main types of this bacteria—A, B, C, W, and Y—cause serious meningococcal disease in the United States. Infections may occur in the brain and spinal cord (also called Meningitis) or other organs in the body.

Though the disease is rare, it can strike quickly. Even with treatment, meningococcal disease can lead to:
- Disabilities—such as hearing loss, brain damage, kidney damage, and amputations—in up to 20% of people infected.
- Death within hours in up to 15% of people infected.

Who gets the disease?
Meningococcal disease occurs most often in infants, teenagers and young adults, and the elderly.

What are symptoms of meningococcal disease?
Early symptoms may include:
- high fever and chills
- vomiting
- nausea
- headache

Because these symptoms are the same as those seen with flu and other viral illnesses, meningococcal disease may be missed early on.

Later symptoms are more specific. These include:
- stiff neck
- severe headache
- sensitivity to light and sound
- confusion
- a pink, red, or purple rash

What should I do if I suspect meningococcal disease?
If you suspect you or a friend or family member has meningococcal disease, CALL 911 or GO TO THE NEAREST EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT.