

Meningococcal Disease

Agent: *Neisseria meningitidis* (bacteria)

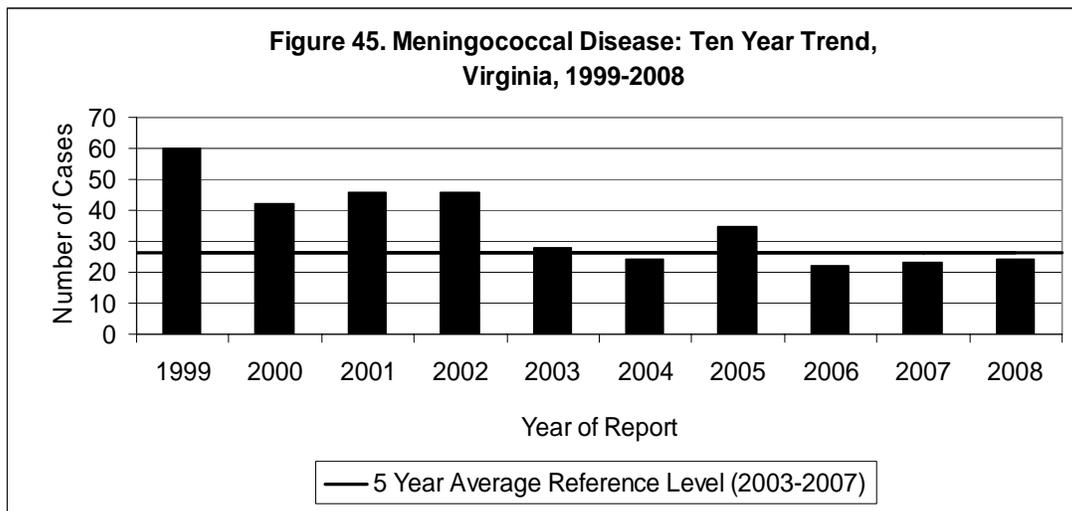
Mode of Transmission: Transmission occurs through contact with respiratory droplets from the nose or throat of infected people (e.g., through coughing or kissing).

Signs/Symptoms: Sudden onset of fever, headache, stiff neck, vomiting, and photophobia (fear of light). A rash may also be present.

Prevention: Vaccination protects against two of the three types of infection that are common in the United States.

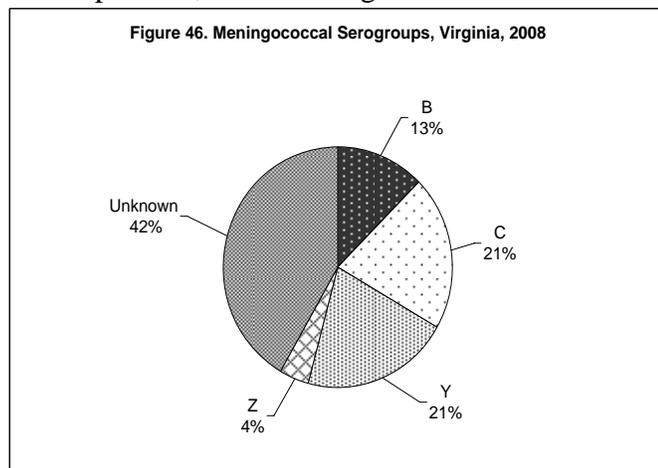
Other Important Information: Crowding, exposure to tobacco smoke, and coexisting respiratory tract infections increase the risk of disease. Five to ten percent of people carry *N. meningitidis* in their nose without having any symptoms of disease; those who develop disease are usually infected by a carrier who does not have symptoms.

During 2008, 24 cases of meningococcal disease were reported in Virginia. This is a slight increase from the 23 cases reported in 2007, but a 9% decrease from the five year average of 26.4 cases per year (Figure 45).



The highest rate of infection occurred in the infant population (3.9 per 100,000). Rates in the other age groups ranged from 0.0 to 0.6 per 100,000. Among cases where race was reported, the rate in the black population was twice the rate in the white population (0.4 and 0.2 per 100,000, respectively). The incidence rate was the same for males and females (0.3 per 100,000).

Of the fourteen cases for which a serogroup was identified, three were group B, five were group C, five were group Y and one was group Z (Figure 46).



The highest incidence rate was observed in the northwest region (0.6 per 100,000), with rates in the other regions ranging from 0.1 to 0.5 per 100,000. By onset date, the largest proportion (49%) of cases occurred in the first quarter of the year, and the smallest proportion (13%) occurred during the third quarter. Among 2008 cases, two deaths were reported in individuals whose infections developed into meningitis. One death occurred in a male in the 20–29 year age group, and the other occurred in a female in the 60 year and older age group.