



Viral Meningitis

(nonbacterial meningitis)



What is viral meningitis?

Viral meningitis is an infection of the lining that covers the brain and spinal cord (meninges). It can be caused by several different viruses.

- Almost all of the cases occur as single, isolated events; outbreaks are rare. This form of meningitis does not usually cause death.

- Viral meningitis must be diagnosed by a doctor, to rule out other illnesses.
- Viral meningitis most often occurs in children, but teens and adults can also get this disease.

Which viruses cause this form of meningitis?

About one half of the cases in the U.S. are due to common intestinal (entero) viruses. Occasionally children will have viral meningitis associated with other viral illnesses.

How are these viruses spread?

- These viruses are usually spread by hand contact or respiratory secretions.
- They can also be spread by items such as toys that are contaminated with feces or urine.

What are the symptoms?

Symptoms usually include:

- Fever
- Headache
- Stiff neck
- Fatigue



Rash, sore throat and intestinal symptoms may also occur. A baby with meningitis might have a bulging of the soft spot on the head.

How soon do symptoms appear?

Symptoms usually appear within one week of exposure. **A person with these symptoms should be seen promptly by a doctor.**

How is viral meningitis treated?

There are no antibiotics to treat viral meningitis. The person may be hospitalized. If treated at home, the doctor will prescribe ways to help the person be more comfortable. In most all cases, people will recover completely in ten days. There are usually no lasting ill effects.

Call a doctor or emergency number immediately if the person has an ongoing high fever or convulsions.

Do most people exposed to the viruses become ill?

Many people are exposed to the viruses that cause meningitis. Most of these people will not develop the illness. Some will have mild diarrhea or respiratory symptoms. Only a small number will develop meningitis symptoms.

Is a person with viral meningitis contagious?

If the virus is passed in the stool, the stool may be infectious. To avoid giving others the virus, people should thoroughly wash their hands after using the toilet. Always follow proper hand washing and diaper changing procedures with children. **Most people are exposed to the virus that causes meningitis, but few ever actually develop the illness!**

To prevent the spread of illness between children, and in child-care facilities

Wash hands carefully

Caregivers and children should wash hands thoroughly with soap **for at least 10 seconds** using warm, running water.

Caregivers should supervise children's handwashing. Always wash hands at the following times:

- **After** toilet use **or after** helping a child use the toilet.
- After **every** diaper change. If gloves are worn, remove after every diaper change, then wash hands.
- **Before and after** eating meals or snacks.
- **Before** any food preparation, handling, or serving (including setting the table).
- **After** blowing nose.



Clean toys and other objects children use

Use an effective disinfectant to clean surfaces and other items such as toys. You can make a solution from **1/4 cup** household liquid chlorine bleach added to **1 gallon** of tap water. Prepare fresh solution daily.

- Each day, clean and disinfect all frequently touched toys in rooms in which infants and toddlers are cared for.
- Clean and disinfect thermometers and other such objects between uses by different children.
- Do not use soft, non-washable toys in the infant/toddler areas unless they are personal articles that are not shared between children.

**For more information,
call
(619) 515-6620.**

