



Viral Meningitis

What is Viral Meningitis?

Meningitis is inflammation of the tissue that covers the brain and spinal cord. **Viral meningitis** is the most common type of meningitis. It is often less severe than **Bacterial meningitis**.

What causes Viral Meningitis?

Enteroviruses are the most common cause of viral meningitis. Only a small number of people who get infected with enteroviruses will actually develop meningitis. Other viruses such as mumps, measles, chickenpox and influenza can also lead to meningitis.

Who can get Viral Meningitis?

You can get viral meningitis at any age. Some people have a higher risk of getting the disease, including children younger than 5 years old, and people with weakened immune systems. The disease may be more severe for babies younger than 1 month old and people with weakened immune systems.

How is it spread?

Viral Meningitis is most often spread from person to person through close contact. You may become infected with the virus that made that person sick. Only a small number of people who get infected with the viruses that cause meningitis will actually develop viral meningitis.

Viruses that can cause meningitis spread in different ways. Learn more about how these viruses spread by visiting CDC's websites.

What are the signs and symptoms?

Common symptoms in babies: fever, fussiness, poor eating, sleepiness, a lack of energy.

Common symptoms in adults: fever, headache, stiff neck, sensitivity to bright light, sleepiness, nausea, vomiting, lack of appetite, a lack of energy.

Should a person with Viral Meningitis be isolated?

Persons with **viral meningitis** should be excluded from work/school until fever-free for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medications. Siblings or close contacts do not need to be excluded from work/school.

What type of treatment and care should be given?

It is very important to see a doctor right away if you think you or your child might have meningitis, who can determine if you have the disease.

Usually there is no specific treatment for **viral meningitis**, but in some instances specific treatment is available depending on the virus causing the inflammation. Antibiotics do not help viral infections, so they are not useful in the treatment of viral meningitis.

Most people completely recover on their own within 7 to 10 days. A hospital stay may be necessary in more severe cases, such as babies or for people with weak immune systems.

Is there a vaccination against this disease?

There are no vaccines for the most common causes of **viral meningitis**. Vaccinations can protect against diseases such as measles, mumps, chickenpox, and influenza that can lead to viral meningitis. Make sure you and your child are vaccinated appropriately. Vaccination is available through a health care provider or at the Bermuda Government Hamilton Health Centre.

Prevent viral meningitis by preventing the spread of viral infections: wash hands thoroughly and often; disinfect commonly touched surfaces; avoid sharing cups or eating utensils; cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue or your upper shirt sleeve, and stay home when you are sick.

Adapted from: *Viral Meningitis*. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2021, <http://www.cdc.gov/meningitis/viral.html> (accessed 17 Feb 2023).

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