



Viral Meningitis



What is Viral Meningitis?

Meningitis is an infection of the membranes that surround the brain and spinal cord and is usually caused by a bacteria or virus. Viral or “aseptic” meningitis, which is the most common type, is caused by an infection with one of several types of viruses. Viral meningitis is rarely serious and usually does not cause any long lasting health problems.

How is Viral Meningitis spread?

Viral meningitis can be caused by a number of different viruses, many of which are transmitted through direct contact with respiratory secretions such as saliva, sputum or nasal secretions of an infected person. The virus can also be found in the stool of an infected person and spread through fecal-oral contamination. Sometimes viral meningitis occurs as a complication of other viral illnesses such as chickenpox, mumps or certain diarrheal illnesses.

How is Viral Meningitis treated?

There is no specific treatment for viral meningitis in most cases. Doctors will often recommend bed rest, plenty of fluids, and medication to relieve fever and headache. Viral meningitis is rarely serious and is usually managed on an outpatient basis, however supportive care is used in more severe cases.

How can Viral Meningitis be prevented?

- Practice good hygiene and always wash your hands thoroughly after going to the bathroom and before preparing food.
- Cover your mouth and nose when you sneeze or cough.
- Avoid sharing eating utensils, pop or water bottles, and drinking glasses.
- Keep immunizations against viral vaccine preventable diseases up-to-date (e.g. measles, mumps, rubella,

polio, chickenpox).

- Stay home when sick.
- Avoiding mosquito bites and other insects that carry disease can be beneficial. Use EPA approved bug spray.
- Stay away from wild mice. Wild rodents can carry a meningitis causing virus, Lymphocytic Choriomeningitis Virus (LCMV) without showing symptoms.
- Notify school, staff and parents of playmates, so that others can be alert for additional cases.

Symptoms of Viral Meningitis:

- Severe headache
- Stiff neck and back
- Vomiting
- Sudden fever
- Irritability
- Sensitivity to light
- Rash

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