

Viral Meningitis

What Is Viral Meningitis?

Meningitis means inflammation of the covering of the brain and spinal cord. Viral meningitis therefore means the inflammation caused by a virus. There are many different types of viruses that can cause meningitis. At least half the cases of meningitis have no obvious cause. The symptoms usually include very sudden onset of severe headache, vomiting, confusion, seizures, progressive tiredness, drowsiness, stiff neck, skin rash especially on hands and feet, and usually with high fever. Symptoms usually last seven to 10 days. Newborns and infants may not have all the classic symptoms above. They may present with irritability, may refuse meals, have unusual sleep patterns and constant crying; newborns and infants may also have the soft spots on their heads bulge and a lower than normal body temperature.

How Do You Get Viral Meningitis?

The virus is normally found in the intestines of humans and can be spread from person to person by coming into contact with the virus by hands or objects contaminated with feces containing the virus. The spread can be through respiratory secretions as well.

What Is the Treatment for Viral Meningitis?

Since this type of meningitis is caused by a virus, there is no specific treatment or cure other than staying hydrated and taking fever and pain medications.

How Can I Prevent Getting Viral Meningitis?

Whether you are at the hospital or at home, the most important way to prevent this infection is washing your hands, especially after a bowel movement and before preparing, handling or eating food. It is also wise to avoid sharing food, glasses, pop cans or utensils.

What Is Good Hand Cleaning?

Our staff welcomes reminders to clean their hands. We invite you to ask anyone who enters your room to clean their hands before and after touching you. Ask any staff member to show you good hand cleaning (20 seconds of soap and running water OR waterless alcohol hand rub for 20 seconds until hands are dry). Please clean your hands often and ask for help to clean your hands if needed:

- After using the bathroom;
- After blowing your nose;
- Before eating and drinking;
- Before and after you touch your dressing or wounds;
- When your hands are visibly dirty; and
- Before you leave your room and after entering your room.

Questions? Infection Prevention and Control department 519-464-4400 Ext. 5253.

Reference: Adapted from CDC Viral Meningitis (August 2019)