

Viral Meningitis

What is **Viral Meningitis**?



Meningitis is an illness in which there is inflammation of the tissues that cover the brain and spinal cord. Viral meningitis, which is the most common type, is caused by an infection with one of several types of viruses. Meningitis can also be caused by infections with several types of bacteria or fungi.

What are the symptoms of **viral meningitis**?

The symptoms may not be the same for every person. The more common symptoms are fever, severe headache, stiff neck, bright lights hurt the eyes, drowsiness or confusion, and nausea and vomiting. In babies, the symptoms are more difficult to identify. They may include fever, fretfulness or irritability, difficulty in awakening the baby, or the baby refuses to eat.

Is **viral meningitis** a serious disease? Viral meningitis is serious but rarely fatal in persons with normal immune symptoms. Usually, the symptoms last from 7 to 10 days and the person recovers completely.

Bacterial meningitis, on the other hand, can be very serious and result in disability or death. For this reason, if you think you or your child has meningitis, see your doctor as soon as possible.

How is viral meningitis diagnosed? Viral meningitis is usually diagnosed by laboratory test of spinal fluid obtained with a spinal tap.

How is viral meningitis treated? No specific treatment recommended for viral meningitis exists at this time. Most patients recover completely on their own, and doctors often will recommend bed rest, plenty of fluids, and medicine to relieve fever and headache.

Can I get **viral meningitis** if I'm around someone who has it?

The viruses that cause viral meningitis are contagious. However, most infected persons either have no symptoms or develop only a cold or rash with low-grade fever. Typically, fewer than 1 of every 1000 persons infected actually develop meningitis. Therefore, if you are around someone who has viral meningitis, you have a moderate chance of becoming infected, but a very small chance of developing meningitis.

How can I reduce my chances of becoming infected?

The most effective method of prevention is to wash your hands thoroughly and often.