



Viral Meningitis (non-bacterial meningitis)

What is viral meningitis?

Viral meningitis is an infection of the fluid that surrounds a person's spinal cord and brain. There are many types of viruses that can cause this disease, including common intestinal (stomach) viruses. Occasionally, children with mumps virus or herpes virus can develop meningitis. Mosquito-borne viruses also account for cases of viral meningitis each year. In many cases, no specific virus can be identified as a cause for meningitis disease.

What are the symptoms?

High fever, headache, general tiredness and stiff neck are common symptoms. Other symptoms could include rash, sore throat, and vomiting. Viral meningitis is usually relatively mild and unlike bacterial meningitis is rarely fatal. In babies, the symptoms include fever, fussiness, crying, swelling of the soft spot on the babies' head, refusing to eat and difficulty waking up. Symptoms typically last 7-10 days.

How soon do symptoms appear?

Symptoms appear 1-10 days after exposure, but usually in less than 4 days.

Who gets viral meningitis?

Anyone can get viral meningitis, but it occurs most often in children. It is most common in the summer and early fall.

How is the virus spread?

The way people get viral meningitis depends on the virus involved. Some viruses that cause viral meningitis spread by person-to-person contact; others spread by insects.

How can you prevent viral meningitis?

People with viral meningitis should thoroughly wash their hands after using the toilet, changing diapers or blowing their nose, and before preparing or eating food. The infected person should also cover their cough and sneeze. If possible, stay inside between dusk and dark to avoid mosquitoes. When outside at dusk or night use insect repellent and wear long pants with long-sleeved shirt.

How is viral meningitis treated?

There are no specific medicines or antibiotics used to treat viral meningitis. Most patients recover within 7-10 days.

