

Meningitis

What is Meningitis:

Meningitis is an inflammation of the meninges (the covering of the brain and spinal cord). Meningitis can be caused by infection from viruses and bacteria (germs). Sometimes fungi, cancers, head injuries or other factors can cause meningitis, but cases from these sources are rare. In general, viral meningitis is generally less severe and resolves without specific treatment. However, the symptoms of viral meningitis are similar to those for bacterial meningitis, which can be fatal.

Transmission of Meningitis:

Most cases of meningitis result from infections that are contagious. The germs usually spread from person to person in tiny drops of fluid from the throat and nose of someone who is infected. This could be a person with meningitis or another infection caused by that germ. People can become infected when they touch the drops and then touch their own noses or mouths. Sharing food, drinking glasses, eating utensils, or tissues, may spread the germs too. Some germs are spread through a person's stool. A person who comes in contact with the stool, such as when changing a diaper, may get the infection that way. Most often, meningitis germs are spread between people who have direct contact, such as those who live together or people who are exposed by kissing or sharing eating utensils. Casual contact at school or work with a person who has meningitis usually will not spread the germ. Getting infected with one of the germs that can cause meningitis does not automatically mean a person will get meningitis. In most cases, the germ will simply cause a cold, upset stomach or ear infection.

What are Signs and Symptoms of Meningitis:

- Sudden onset of fever
- Intense headache
- Nausea and sometimes vomiting
- Stiff neck
- Sensitivity to light
- Rash
- Confusion or difficulty concentrating
- Lethargy



Prevention of Meningitis:

Many of the viruses and bacteria that can cause meningitis are common. Good personal hygiene is important to prevent any infection. Washing hands thoroughly and often, especially before eating and after using the bathroom, is your first line of defense against the spread of many illnesses. Not sharing food drinks, or eating utensils can help stop the spread of meningitis germs as well. Safe and effective vaccines are available to protect against bacterial meningitis such as the meningococcal vaccine which protects against meningococcal disease, a serious bacterial infection that can lead to bacterial meningitis.