



VIRAL (ASEPTIC) MENINGITIS FACT SHEET

What is viral meningitis?

Viral meningitis is usually a mild to moderate illness which causes a swelling of the lining of the brain and spinal cord. Viral meningitis can be severe, but it rarely causes death.

How can you be exposed to viral meningitis?

The majority of these viruses can be found in the stool of persons who are infected. They can be spread by hand-to-mouth exposure when people do not properly wash their hands. These viruses can also be spread easily among small children who are still in diapers, and when people who change diapers do not wash their hands. Other types of viral meningitis can be spread by exposure to upper respiratory fluids, such as saliva, or nasal mucus. Hand washing is the best way to prevent viral meningitis.

What are the symptoms of viral meningitis?

The most common symptoms of viral meningitis are headache, fever, stiff neck, nausea, vomiting, and sensitivity to light. In newborns and small infants, the symptoms are hard to recognize. They may include fever, fussiness, refusal to eat and difficulty in waking. The symptoms of meningitis will not be the same for everyone. If you or your family members have these symptoms, see a doctor right away.

How soon after exposure do symptoms appear?

Symptoms will usually appear within one week of being exposed to viral meningitis.

How is viral meningitis treated?

There is no specific treatment for viral meningitis. However, most patients will make a full recovery on their own. Doctors often recommend bed rest, plenty of fluids and medicine to relieve fever and headache.

Is a person with viral meningitis contagious?

Although the viruses can be easily transmitted, the risk of developing viral meningitis is very low.

Should a person with viral meningitis be isolated?

Strict isolation is not necessary. Since most cases are due to viruses that may be passed in the stool, people diagnosed with viral meningitis should be instructed to thoroughly wash their hands after using the restroom.

Where can I get more information about viral meningitis?

www.cdc.gov

www.dshs.state.tx.us

Source of Information

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

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