

# PUBLIC HEALTH FACT SHEET



COUNTY MICHIGAN  
HEALTH DIVISION

Department of Health & Human Services

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## Viral Meningitis

### What is Viral Meningitis?

Viral (or aseptic) Meningitis is a swelling of the membranes around the spinal cord and brain caused by a virus. It is a serious, but not usually fatal disease.

### What viruses cause Viral Meningitis?

Many different viruses can cause meningitis. In the summer and fall months meningitis is most commonly caused by enteroviruses. Other viral infections that can lead to meningitis are Mumps, Chickenpox, Measles and Influenza (Flu). In most cases, people who are infected with these viruses do not develop meningitis.

### What are the symptoms of Viral Meningitis?

Symptoms can range from mild to severe and may include:

- high fever
- severe headache
- nausea/vomiting
- sleepiness or trouble waking
- loss of appetite
- sensitivity to bright light
- irritability
- stiff neck

### Are there complications of Viral Meningitis?

Usually symptoms last seven to ten days and recovery is complete. Because the symptoms of Viral Meningitis are similar to those of bacterial meningitis, which is usually more severe and can be fatal, it is important for people suspected of having meningitis to seek medical care.

There is no specific treatment for Viral Meningitis, except to make the patient more comfortable. A hospital stay may be necessary in more severe cases or for people with weak immune systems.

### How can Viral Meningitis be prevented?

- Keep hands clean by washing thoroughly with soap and water or by using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer when soap and water are not available.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you sneeze or cough.
- Wash hard surfaces and toys with soap and water or disinfectant.
- Avoid sharing with others items contaminated with saliva such as cups, eating utensils, pacifiers, gum, and candy.
- Refrain from kissing others.
- Immunize children against Varicella (Chickenpox), Measles, and Mumps.
- Get a flu shot each year.
- Prevent mosquitoes from biting you and your children.
- Eliminate any rodent infestation that might be in your home.

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## **HAND WASHING INSTRUCTIONS:**

- use soap and running water
- rub your hands vigorously for 20 seconds
- wash all surfaces, including:
  - backs of hands
  - wrists
  - between fingers
  - under fingernails
- rinse well
- dry hands with a paper towel
- turn off the water using a paper towel instead of bare hands

**For more information on Viral Meningitis, call (248) 858-1406 or toll free 1 (800) 848-5533.**

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