

PUBLIC HEALTH FACT SHEET



COUNTY MICHIGAN
HEALTH DIVISION

Department of Health & Human Services

oakgov.com/health

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 common, but not usually fatal or serious disease. It is sometimes called Aseptic Meningitis because no bacteria are found in the spinal fluid.

What viruses cause Viral Meningitis?

A lot of different viruses can cause meningitis. Sometimes Viral Meningitis is a result of other diseases. In most cases, tests to identify the type of virus are not done.

What are the symptoms?

Symptoms can range from mild to severe and may include:

- sudden fever
- headache
- vomiting
- listlessness
- irritability
- stiff neck and back
- loss of appetite
- seizures
- rash
- intestinal problems
- breathing problems

Are there complications?

Illness seldom lasts longer than ten days and recovery is usually complete. Most of the time there are no continuing problems but weakness, muscle spasm, trouble sleeping and personality changes may occur for a year or more.

There is no specific treatment for most cases, except trying to make the patient more comfortable. Often the patient is watched for the problems mentioned above, during a short hospital stay.

What can be done to prevent Viral Meningitis?

Since many viruses can cause Viral Meningitis, it is important to practice measures that cut down the spread of viruses:

- Good handwashing after going to the toilet and before preparing food
- Covering the mouth and nose with a tissue when you sneeze or cough
- Disposing of used tissues, followed by proper hand washing
- Not sharing or putting objects in the mouth until washed with hot soap and water (e.g. pacifiers, toys, silverware etc.).

Immunizing children against Polio, Measles, Mumps and Rubella can prevent Aseptic Meningitis caused by these viruses.

If you have other questions, ask your doctor.

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.

For additional copies, visit our website at www.oakgov.com/health or contact: