

Meningitis is an infection of the fluid of a person's spinal cord and the fluid that surrounds the brain. Viral meningitis, which is the most common type, is caused by an infection with one of several types of viruses.

Symptoms

- The symptoms of meningitis are not the same for every person.
- The more common symptoms are fever, severe headache, stiff neck, photophobia (bright lights hurt the eyes), drowsiness or concussion, nausea and vomiting.
- In babies, the symptoms are more difficult to identify. They may include fever, fretfulness or irritability, difficulty in awakening the baby or refusal to eat.

Transmission

- Enteroviruses, the most common cause of viral meningitis, are most often spread through direct contact with respiratory secretions (saliva, sputum or nasal mucus).
- The virus may also be found in the stool of persons who are infected.
- The virus is usually spread when the virus gets on your hands, and then rubbing your nose, mouth or eyes.
- The incubation period is usually between 3-7 days.

Treatment

- There is no specific treatment for viral meningitis at this time.
- Most patients recover on their own, the doctors often will give medication to relieve the symptoms.

Prevention

- The most effective method of prevention is to wash your hands thoroughly and often.

Additional Information

Viral meningitis is serious but rarely fatal in persons with normal immune systems. Usually the symptoms last from 7-10 days and the person recovers completely.

All information is general in nature and is not intended to be used as a substitute for appropriate professional advice.