

# Viral Meningitis

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## What is it?

- When a virus infects the lining of the brain and spinal cord it is called viral meningitis.
- It is usually caused by an infection from one of a group of viruses known as Enterovirus, such as Coxsackievirus and Echovirus.
- Symptoms may not be the same for every person. The more common symptoms for adults include:
  - fever
  - severe headache
  - stiff neck
  - bright lights hurt the eyes
  - drowsiness or confusion
  - nausea and vomiting
- The more common symptoms for babies include:
  - fever
  - baby may refuse to eat
  - fretfulness or irritability, cannot be soothed
  - it may be hard to wake the baby
- Anyone who develops a fever with any of the above symptoms should see a doctor right away.

## What is the difference between Viral Meningitis and Bacterial Meningitis?

- Viral meningitis is caused by a virus and rarely causes death.
- Bacterial meningitis can be very serious and needs to be treated promptly.
- The symptoms for viral and bacterial meningitis are often the same.

## How is it spread?

- Enteroviruses, the most common cause of viral meningitis, are often spread through direct contact with saliva, sputum or nasal mucus of an infected person.
- The spread usually happens by shaking hands with an infected person or touching something they have touched, and then rubbing your own nose, mouth or eyes.

## How is it spread? (continued)

- The virus can also be in the stool of an infected person. The virus spreads this way among small children who are not yet toilet trained.
- Adults can also spread the virus by changing an infected baby's diaper.
- It usually takes between 3 to 7 days from the time you are infected until symptoms develop.
- You can usually spread the virus to someone else about 3 days after you are infected until about 10 days after you develop symptoms.

## Is there treatment for it?

- There is no specific treatment for Viral Meningitis.
- Most people will recover fully.
- Doctors will often recommend bed rest, plenty of fluids and medicine to relieve the fever and headache.

## What can be done to prevent the spread of it?

- The best way to prevent the spread of the virus is to clean your hands well and often before and after handling food, after using the washroom and after sneezing or wiping your nose.
- Wash objects and surfaces with a disinfectant.
- If you think you or your child has meningitis, see your doctor right away.

## For more information

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

<http://www.cdc.gov/meningitis/viral.html>

**Stop the spread of germs and infection.  
Clean your hands.**

