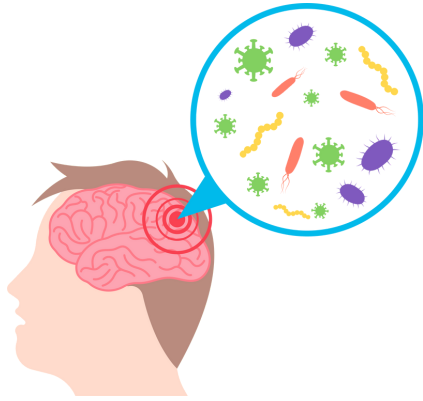


Viral Meningitis Fact Sheet



What is it?

Viral meningitis is a common disease caused by a virus that infects the layers around the brain and spinal cord.

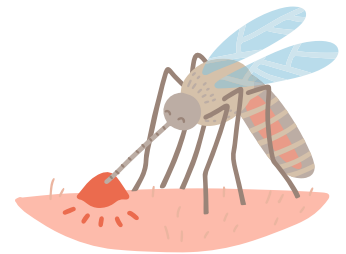
- Most people with viral meningitis recover fully within 7 to 10 days.
- This disease is more common in infants less than 1 year old, but can occur at any age.
- Almost all the cases occur as single, isolated events; outbreaks are rare.
- This form of meningitis does not usually cause death.

How does it spread?

There are many viruses that can cause viral meningitis, the most common are intestinal (entero) viruses. These viruses spread through contact with an infected person's stool (poop), nose/throat drops, or saliva.

Other viruses that can cause viral meningitis include:

- West Nile virus from mosquito bites.
- Measles, mumps, herpes viruses, and HIV.



How do I know if I have it?

The most common symptoms for viral meningitis are:

- Fever
- Headache
- Nausea
- Stiff neck
- Fatigue
- Irritability

Some people may also have:

- Rash
- Sore throat
- Diarrhea
- Vomiting

Infants may not eat as well, be more irritable or cranky, and be more sleepy than usual.



How can I protect myself?

To protect yourself from intestinal (entero) viruses, make sure you:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Do not share drinks, eating utensils, lipstick, or other items that may have contact with infected saliva.

To prevent other viruses that cause viral meningitis, you can:

- Avoid mosquito bites.
- Stay up-to-date on routine childhood vaccinations.



How should I take care of myself or someone who has viral meningitis?

There is no specific treatment for viral meningitis and most people recover within 7 to 10 days.

If you are caring for someone with viral meningitis, your chances of getting sick are very low, but you should:

- Wash your hands often. If soap and water are not available, alcohol-based hand sanitizer can be used.
- Clean surfaces and items that come into contact with the sick person.

Strict isolation is not required, however people who have viral meningitis should not return to school or work until their symptoms are gone.

When should I call a doctor?

Anyone with symptoms of viral meningitis should see a doctor right away because any type of meningitis can be serious. Only a doctor can tell if someone has meningitis, what is causing it, and the best treatment.



To learn more, visit Viral Meningitis webpage at www.cdc.gov.

