

Meningitis

Meningitis is an inflammation and infection of the protective membranes covering the brain and spinal cord known as the meninges. This inflammation is usually caused by a virus or bacteria.

Viral Meningitis is more common than bacterial meningitis and usually occurs in late spring and summer. Signs and symptoms of viral meningitis may include stiff neck, headache, nausea, vomiting and rash. Most causes of viral meningitis run a short, uneventful course. Since the causative agent is a virus, antibiotics are not effective. Persons who have had contact with an individual with viral meningitis do not require any treatment.

Bacterial Meningitis occurs rarely and sporadically throughout the year, although outbreaks tend to occur in late winter and early spring. Bacterial meningitis in college age students may be due to an organism called meningococcal bacteria. Because meningococcal meningitis can cause grave illness and rapidly progress to death, it requires early diagnosis and treatment. Persons who have had intimate contact with someone who has been diagnosed with meningococcal meningitis should seek medical attention so they may get prophylactic therapy, which is a course of antibiotics. Untreated meningococcal meningitis can be fatal.

Where does meningitis come from and how is it transmitted? The bacteria that cause meningococcal disease are spread through respiratory droplets and direct contact with nasal and oral secretions. People may harbor this organism, but never become ill. Others get quite ill with meningitis. Common everyday activities can facilitate this spread, including kissing; sharing utensils and water bottles; sharing chapstick or cigarettes, etc.; and being in close quarters, such as living in a dormitory.

Vaccines are available that help protect against meningococcal diseases that are commonly seen in the United States:

- Meningococcal Conjugate Vaccine should be administered to all 11-12 year olds, followed by a booster dose at age 16 years. This vaccine protects against serogroup types A, C, W and Y, which account for two thirds of meningitis cases among college students.
- Meningococcal vaccines for serogroup B are available for adolescents and young adults 16-23 years of age.

Even though the disease is rare, it can result in severe, permanent disabilities and death, so it's important to take every precaution to help protect against it.

For more information on meningococcal vaccines and who should receive them, visit <https://www.cdc.gov/meningococcal/about/index.html>

Meningococcal Disease Vaccination Waiver form can be found on the Millersville University Admissions website.



<http://www.millersville.edu/healthservices>

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