

VIRAL MENINGITIS

(Aseptic meningitis, Nonbacterial meningitis)

<i>What is viral meningitis?</i>	Viral meningitis is an acute disease which results in an infection of the membranes of the brain and spinal cord. Many viruses are capable of producing meningitis, but the most common agents are enteroviruses. Viral meningitis is relatively common but rarely serious, and recovery is usually complete.
<i>How is it spread?</i>	The mode of transmission varies with the infectious agent, but may be by direct contact, including respiratory droplets from the nose and throat. Infection usually causes only a subclinical mucosal infection; invasion sufficient to cause systemic disease is comparatively rare.
<i>What are the early signs?</i>	Early sign of meningitis vary, depending on the type of virus, but may include sudden fever, intense headache, nausea and vomiting, and stiff neck. GI and respiratory symptoms may be associated with infection with enteroviruses.
<i>What about contacts?</i>	Investigation of contacts is not usually indicated; however, if symptoms appear, parents should check with their family physician. People who may have a depressed immune system should also check with their physician.
<i>How long is it contagious?</i>	It depends on the infectious agent; however, most people already have the various viruses in their systems, but the vast majority of them do not develop meningitis.
<i>When is it OK to return to school?</i>	Is OK to return to school when recovered, with a doctor's authorization.
<i>What else is important to know?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage children to practice good handwashing and other hygiene measures such as covering the mouth when coughing or sneezing. • Disinfection: no precautions are needed beyond routine sanitary practices.

This fact sheet is not intended to replace the advice of your physician. Parents should contact their healthcare provider if they have concerns regarding their child's health. If you have general questions, you may contact a Kalamazoo County nurse at 373-5264 or 373-5267.

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