

# Facts about Meningitis (Viral)

## **Viral meningitis is a serious infection of the lining of the brain.**

It is caused by a number of common viruses but most people infected by these viruses do not get viral meningitis. Viral meningitis is not common.

When one person gets the disease, spread to others and outbreaks are rare. It is not necessary to keep a person with viral meningitis away from others.

Some signs of viral meningitis are:

- fever
- headache
- a stiff and painful neck, especially when you try to touch your chin to your chest
- upset stomach, vomiting, poor appetite
- trouble staying awake
- rash

To find out if someone has viral meningitis, a doctor uses a needle to take some fluid from around the spinal cord. The fluid is tested to see if a virus or bacteria caused the disease.

Children may feel very sick and may be hospitalized. Children usually get better in about one or two weeks. There are usually not any long-term health problems after viral meningitis.

## **How is viral meningitis spread?**

Viruses that can cause viral meningitis are spread through contact with bowel movements, saliva or discharge from the nose of an infected person. Most people who are in contact with someone with viral meningitis will not catch meningitis themselves.

## **Viral meningitis is a reportable disease in British Columbia.**

If there is a case of viral meningitis in a child or adult in the child care centre or school, immediately report the case to the Licensing Officer or Public Health Nurse assigned to your centre or school.



## **What to Do at Home**

- If your child has been in contact with someone with viral meningitis, watch your child for signs of the disease.
- Make sure your child washes their hands carefully after using the toilet, and covers their nose and mouth with a tissue (or a sleeve — not a hand) when they sneeze or cough.
- Wash your hands and your child's hands carefully after changing the diaper of a child with viral meningitis.



## **When to Call Your Doctor or 811**

Talk to your doctor if your child has been in contact with someone with viral meningitis and gets any of the following signs:

- temperature of 38.5 °C or higher with a headache
- neck pain or stiffness
- upset stomach, vomiting
- poor appetite
- tiredness
- rash



**A child with viral meningitis may go to school or the child care centre if they feel well enough to take part in activities.**

Acetaminophen (Tylenol™, Tempra™) or ibuprophen (Advil™, Motrin™) may help reduce a fever and provide some comfort. Always follow the directions on the package about how much and how often to take acetaminophen or ibuprofen.

**Never give products containing ASA (acetylsalicylic acid, such as Aspirin™) to anyone under the age of 20 years.** Use of ASA products by children can lead to Reye's syndrome, a serious condition affecting the brain and liver.