
Meningitis (Viral/Aseptic)

Description: Meningitis is an infection of the meninges, which are tissues that cover the brain and spinal cord and diagnosed by a spinal tap. Aseptic meningitis is usually caused by a virus.

Symptoms: Sudden onset of fever, headache, nausea or vomiting, stiff neck and irritability. The infection usually lasts seven-10 days and complications seldom arise. Viral meningitis is not usually life threatening for most healthy adults and children.

How it is Spread: It is usually spread through contact with stool or respiratory droplets.

Incubation Period: 2-21 days, varies depending on the type of virus.

How Long Can a Person Spread the Infection To Others? A person with viral/aseptic meningitis is most infectious seven-10 days before and after onset of symptoms. The virus may be excreted in the stool for one-two months after the illness.

Responsibilities of Parents and Caregivers:

- The person must be under a physician's care.
- Notify the local health department the next business day of such a case or suspected case. (See ODH Communicable Disease Chart)
- Exclude the child until the fever is gone.

Control of Spread:

- Strict hand washing, especially after toilet use, diaper changes, handling tissues and before meals. Help children wash their hands. Strictly follow cleaning and sanitation guidelines. Avoid sharing water or drinks.
- Observe other children for symptoms and ask parents to take child to doctor immediately if symptoms develop.

Treatment: The person must be under a physician's care. A physician's diagnosis is essential to determine the agent causing the infection. There is no specific treatment other than for symptoms. More serious cases may require hospitalization for treatment of symptoms.