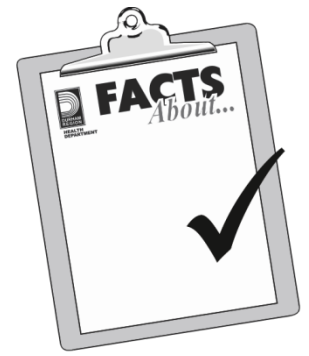




FACTS *About...*



HEALTH DEPARTMENT



Meningitis

What is it?

Meningitis is an infection of the tissues covering the brain and spinal cord. There are several causes of meningitis including bacteria or viruses. Bacterial meningitis is a rare but serious infection and may be caused by *Streptococcus pneumoniae* or *Neisseria meningitidis*. *Haemophilus influenzae* type b (Hib) bacterial meningitis has largely been eliminated in many countries due to immunization.

Viral meningitis is also serious but often less severe than bacterial meningitis. *Enteroviruses* are the most common group of viruses causing meningitis. Vaccines are available to help protect against some bacteria and viruses that can lead to meningitis.

How is it spread?

Meningitis does not spread easily from person to person and spread depends on the specific germ that caused meningitis. Bacterial meningitis is most commonly spread through contact with fluids from the nose or throat of someone who has the infection. Some germs that cause bacterial meningitis can also spread through food. Viral meningitis can spread through respiratory secretions or stool of someone who has the infection.

What do I look for?

Symptoms of viral and bacterial meningitis are often the same. Symptoms develop suddenly and can include: high fever, severe headache, vomiting, confusion, stiff neck, rash, sensitivity to light, and drowsiness. Newborns and infants may be irritable, refuse meals, have unusual sleep patterns, and constant crying.

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For more information

Durham Region Health Department

905-666-6241 1-800-841-2729 durham.ca

If you require this information in an accessible format, contact 1-800-841-2729.



How is it treated?

Bacterial meningitis is treated with antibiotics. If infected, a person is considered non-infectious after 24-48 hours of antibiotic treatment.

There is no specific treatment for viral meningitis and most people with good immune systems completely recover on their own. Antibiotics are not useful in treating viral meningitis.

How can I protect myself?

- Wash hands frequently and thoroughly with soap and water or use hand sanitizer when hands are not visibly dirty.
- Cough or sneeze into your elbow and encourage others to do the same.
- Do not share water bottles, straws, eating utensils, musical instruments, cigarettes, toothbrushes, toys, or anything that has been in contact with saliva, nose or throat secretions.
- Wash your hands after handling nose and throat secretions (i.e. after disposal of facial tissues containing nose and throat secretions).
- Keep up to date with immunizations and speak to your health care provider about your need for other vaccines.
- See Facts About... Meningococcal C Conjugate Vaccine
- See Facts About... Meningococcal Quadrivalent Conjugate Vaccine
- See Facts About... Pneumococcal Disease
- See Facts About... Pneumococcal Conjugate Vaccine
- See Facts About... Pneumococcal Polysaccharide Vaccine
- See Facts About... Haemophilus Influenzae Type B
- See Facts About... Diphtheria, Pertussis, Tetanus, Polio & Haemophilus Influenzae B Vaccines
- If you are ill stay at home and isolate yourself from others.

January 9, 2020

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