

TIPS

for Preventing Meningitis

Meningitis is inflammation of the lining around the brain and spinal cord. It is usually caused by an infection. There are three kinds of meningitis: viral meningitis, bacterial meningitis, and fungal meningitis. Viral meningitis is the most common, but bacterial meningitis is the most serious. The following tips can help prevent the spread of meningitis.



Understand the facts. Some people get meningitis when their immune system is weak or when they have recently been sick. A head injury also may increase one's risk of meningitis.

Know the symptoms. Although the symptoms of meningitis can vary from person to person, the most common symptoms among teens and young adults are seizures, fever, headache, vomiting, trouble staying awake, and a stiff and painful neck.

Know the possible outcomes. Unless treatment begins immediately, meningitis may cause permanent damage, including mental impairment, deafness, and paralysis. About 10% of people with bacterial meningitis die.

Make hygiene a priority. Meningitis is contagious. It can be passed through sneezing, coughing, kissing, and coming into close contact with someone with meningitis. Wash your hands for at least 20 seconds after you have been in the proximity of someone who has meningitis.

Take the proper safety precautions. Be careful around people who have meningitis. If somebody in your family has meningitis, try to limit his or her contact with other family members.

Help prevent transmission. Avoid sharing anything that comes in contact with your mouth. Such items include water bottles, toothbrushes, lip balm, towels, drinking glasses, eating utensils, cosmetics, smoking materials, and food or drink from common sources.

Be prepared when traveling. If you are planning a trip to parts of the world where meningitis is common, seek medical advice about getting a vaccination for meningitis. Also, follow precautions to help stop the spread of meningitis.

Receive medical advice. Seek medical advice if you come into close contact with someone with meningitis. Depending on the extent of your exposure and the type of meningitis, your doctor may advise you to take an antibiotic as a preventive measure.

This page is part of an ongoing series of practical tips for patients with neurologic disorders. If you have compiled clinically relevant tips that you wish to share, please contact the editor at info@neurologyreviews.com.

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