



Meningitis

Certain types of meningitis are reportable diseases in Oklahoma. These are meningitis caused by the bacteria *Haemophilus influenzae* and *Neisseria meningitidis*.

Meningitis can be a severe or fatal disease caused by a bacteria, virus, fungi or parasite. The word "meningitis" means swelling of the covering the brain and spinal cord. Symptoms of meningitis can include: fever, rash, headache, stiff neck, nausea, vomiting, or fatigue. Infants may be irritable, very drowsy, very fussy, or refuse to eat. Seek medical care without delay if you or your child has those symptoms.

Viral meningitis is the most common form of meningitis. About 90% of meningitis cases are caused by viruses. Several different viruses can cause viral meningitis. These viruses are spread from person-to-person through direct or indirect contact with feces, usually on unclean hands or surfaces. Viruses can be spread to others from about three days after someone is infected until about 10 days after they become sick.

- Most patients will fully recover on their own after bed rest and plenty of fluids. Sometimes health care providers will prescribe medicines to treat symptoms such as fever and headaches.

Bacterial meningitis can be caused by bacteria such as *Streptococcus* or *Neisseria meningitidis*. Bacterial meningitis is usually more severe and requires prompt treatment with antibiotics. The bacteria are spread by direct contact with fluids from the nose and throat of an infected person. Only people with very close contact to someone with bacterial meningitis (and only *Neisseria meningitidis* or one form of *Haemophilus*) need to take preventive antibiotics.

These are usually household members, very close contacts, certain health care workers, and day care center playmates. The health departments work to make sure that those close contacts receive antibiotics from their health care provider or through the health department.

People with casual contact such as classmates or co-workers do not need to receive antibiotics.

- When a large cluster or outbreak of bacterial meningitis occurs, the health department may recommend antibiotics for additional groups, although this is rare.

The routine **childhood vaccines** protect children from most common causes of meningitis such as *Haemophilus influenzae* type b (Hib) and *Streptococcus pneumoniae*. Meningococcal vaccines are also recommended for children and some adults. For more information on these vaccines, call your health care provider or the local health department.

Hand hygiene is the most important way to protect yourself and others. Wash your hands often, using soap and water when you can see that your hands are dirty. Wash your hands after using the toilet, after changing diapers, before preparing or eating food, after caring for a sick person, and after touching an animal.

- Use alcohol-based hand products when your hands already look clean.

Clean surfaces and items such as toys every day, and when saliva or nose/throat fluids are on them. In settings such as child care centers, wash objects and surfaces with a diluted bleach solution:

- For hard surfaces such as diaper-changing areas and bathrooms, use a 1:10 dilution of bleach (mix one cup of bleach with one gallon of water).
- For other objects such as toys and eating utensils, use a weaker bleach solution (mix one tablespoon of bleach with one gallon of water).

Meningitis Fact Sheets and Information:

Meningitis Fact Sheet (170k.pdf)

Meningitis Hoja Informativa (194k.pdf)