



## Viral Meningitis

Your child may have been exposed to this disease on \_\_\_\_\_.  
Date(s)

Please check your child for symptoms through \_\_\_\_\_.  
Date

*If your child has symptoms, please contact your child's healthcare provider.*

### **If my child has this disease, when can he or she return to school or child care?**

**A child with viral meningitis may NOT return to school or child care UNTIL he or she no longer has symptoms.**

**Viral meningitis is an infection of the tissue that covers the brain and spinal cord.** It is most often caused by viruses like the type that causes hand-foot-and-mouth disease, chickenpox, mumps, viruses spread by mosquitos, and others. However, only a small number of people who get these illnesses will develop meningitis.

Symptoms are:

- Fever
- Irritability
- Stiff neck
- Sensitivity to bright light
- Sleepiness, trouble waking from sleep, or low energy
- Nausea and/or vomiting
- Loss of appetite

Symptoms usually start 3 to 7 days after a person is exposed to the virus, but it can be different for each person.

### **What can I do now?**

**Watch your child** for symptoms of this disease. **It is very important to call a doctor or healthcare provider right away if you think you or your child might have meningitis.** At first, viral meningitis has the same symptoms as meningitis caused by bacteria, but bacterial meningitis worsens and can cause severe illness and death. Only a doctor can determine if you or your child has this disease, if it is caused by a virus or bacteria, and the best treatment. Most people with viral meningitis usually get better within 7 to 10 days.

**If your child gets sick, prevent others from getting ill by:**

- Keep your child at home until your child no longer has symptoms.
- Wash hands carefully.
- Cover your cough with a tissue or cough into your upper arm, and put used tissues in the trash.

This can be a serious disease for babies, children younger than 5 years old, and people with immune system problems.

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

If you have close contact with a sick person you may become infected with the virus that caused the meningitis, but you are not likely to develop meningitis. Only a small number of people who are infected with viruses will actually develop meningitis.

Viruses that cause meningitis are spread in different ways, such as:

- Coughing and sneezing
- Kissing, hugging, or sharing eating utensils with people who are sick
- Touching the stool of someone who is sick
- A bite from a mosquito carrying a virus
- Touching a surface or object with the virus on it.