

What is it?

Meningitis is a disease caused by the inflammation of the protective membrane covering the brain and spinal cord known as the meninges. Bacteria or viruses may cause this infection.

What are the symptoms?

Meningitis infection is characterized by a sudden onset of fever, headache, and stiff neck. It is often accompanied by other symptoms, such as:

- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Photophobia (sensitivity to light)
- Altered mental state

How is it spread?

Meningitis is spread through contact with respiratory secretions (saliva, sputum or nasal mucus) of an infected person. Transmission may occur through coughing, kissing or sneezing. Viral meningitis may be transmitted by the fecal-oral route. The virus is passed in the stool.

How can I protect myself?

Keeping up to date with recommended immunizations is the best defense. Good hygiene is also an important way to prevent most infections. Avoid sharing drinking glasses, water bottles, eating utensils, tissues, and lip-gloss/lipsticks. Wash hands often with soap, especially after using the washroom and before preparing food.

Other Questions?

Talk to your health care provider or call our Communicable Disease Program at 613-966-5500 or 1-800-267-2803, ext. 349. | TTY Dial 711 (1-800-267-6511) | hpePublicHealth.ca

Reference

- Heymann, D. L., (2008). Control of Communicable Diseases Manual. (19th Ed.). Washington, DC: American Public Health Association.

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