

<i>Client:</i>	<i>Date:</i>
<i>Clinician:</i>	

Meningitis is an inflammation of the fluid and lining around the brain and spinal cord. It's most often caused by germs that infect the fluid and lining. Viral meningitis is less serious. Most people get better with no treatment. Bacterial meningitis is more serious. When not treated quickly, bacterial meningitis can be fatal.

Who is at Risk?

- Children younger than 5
- Older adults
- People who have had their spleen removed
- People who are more likely to come in contact with meningitis germs (such as children in childcare centers, students in college dorms, and soldiers in military barracks)

How Does Meningitis Spread?

- **Droplets:** Meningitis germs spread through the air in droplets when someone with the infection coughs, sneezes, laughs, or talks. You can breathe in the germs. Or, your hands can transfer the germs to your eyes, nose, or mouth.
- **Person-to-person:** You can come in contact with the germs if you share food, a drinking glass, eating utensils, or a toothbrush with an infected person. Meningitis germs can also be spread through kissing.
- **Direct spread:** The germs that cause meningitis can spread to the brain and spinal cord from an infection in another part of the body.
- **Fecal-oral:** People infected with viral meningitis have the virus in their stool. When they don't wash their hands well after using the bathroom, they can spread the germs to objects, such as telephones and doorknobs.

Call your doctor right away if you have a severe headache with any of the following:

• Stiff neck	• Sensitivity to light
• Fever	• Nausea and vomiting
• Confusion	• Seizures

To Help Prevent Meningitis

- Wash your hands often with soap and water. If you can't wash your hands, use an alcohol-based hand gel containing at least 60 percent alcohol.
- Avoid sharing personal items, such as food, drinking glasses, eating utensils, or towels.
- If you have had close contact with someone who has meningitis, ask your doctor whether you should take antibiotics to prevent infection.

Adapted from Krames On-Line

IMPORTANT NOTICE

Contact the on-call nurse if you are experiencing any change in your current health condition.
 For ALL emergencies requiring IMMEDIATE medical attention, call 911.