

## How is it treated?

There is no vaccine or specific treatment for Viral Meningitis.

Bed rest, plenty of fluids and medicine to relieve symptoms such as fever and headache are recommended.

Most patients recover completely within 7-10 days.

## What about staying away from work or school?

As the viruses that cause Viral Meningitis are common ones found in the environment, there is no specific isolation of people with Viral Meningitis.

However because most cases are due to viruses passed in faeces (poo), people with Viral Meningitis are advised to wash their hands thoroughly after using the toilet.

People changing nappies of infected children must also practice good hand washing.

Those infected may need to stay away from work or school during the infectious period—this should be discussed with your doctor. People may return to work when they feel well enough.

## Other resources available on infectious illnesses:

- Norovirus
- Whooping cough
- Tuberculosis
- Campylobacter
- Salmonella
- Meningococcal Disease

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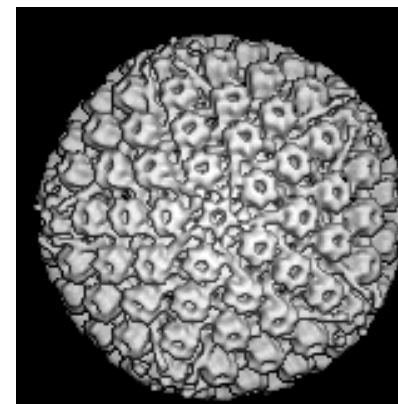
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# Viral Meningitis



# Canterbury

## District Health Board

Te Poari Hauora ō Waitaha

# What is Viral Meningitis?

**Meningitis** is the inflammation of the lining that covers the brain and spinal cord. It can be caused by a wide range of bacteria, viruses, and chemicals.

**Viral Meningitis** (also known as nonbacterial meningitis) is caused by a number of different viruses and is relatively common. It is rarely fatal. Less than 1 in 100 people who get infected will develop meningitis. Outbreaks are rare, as it mostly occurs as a single event.

Anyone can get Viral Meningitis, but it is most common in young children and in people under 40 years of age.

**As the symptoms are similar to Bacterial Meningitis, urgent medical attention should be sought. Visit your general practitioner for correct diagnosis and treatment.**

**Don't wait - take action**

## What are the symptoms?

Common symptoms include the sudden onset of:

- Fever
- Severe headache
- Stiff neck
- Photophobia (bright lights hurt eyes)
- Drowsiness or confusion
- Nausea and vomiting

A rash and intestinal symptoms (e.g. diarrhoea) may also occur.

Infants are more difficult to diagnose. They may:

- Appear extremely irritable
- Refuse to eat
- Have vomiting
- Difficulty waking

Symptoms generally appear one week after exposure to a virus. A person is infectious (and can spread the virus) between 3-10 days after onset of symptoms, depending on the underlying cause of the infection.

**Your doctor will advise you of the infectious period of your illness.**

## How is it caught?

Most people are exposed to the many different viruses that cause Viral Meningitis throughout their lives without developing the illness. In most cases where illness occurs the causative virus is never identified.

Viruses can be spread through different means:

- People coughing and sneezing
- Poor hygiene i.e. not washing hands after going to the toilet/nappy changing
- Sewage polluted water

If you have been near someone who has Viral Meningitis there is a moderate chance of becoming infected with the virus, but a very small chance of developing Meningitis.

## How can you prevent spread?

The most effective method of preventing spread of the virus is to wash your hands thoroughly and often.

Hand washing is important for people changing nappies of young children that are infected.

Routine cleaning of surfaces with a dilute bleach solution may be necessary in an institutional setting e.g. early childhood centres, rest homes and hospitals.