

FactSheet

Para Su Información

Meningitis

What is meningitis?

The term “meningitis” describes any infection of the covering of the brain and/or spinal cord, and may be caused by several different organisms. There are two main types of meningitis:

- Bacterial
- Aseptic (viral)

What are the symptoms of meningitis?

Signs and symptoms of meningitis may include:

- High fever
- Severe headache
- Stiffness of the neck
- Nausea and/or vomiting
- Skin rash
- Sensitivity to light

Are there differences in the illness caused by the different types of meningitis?

Yes. Illness caused by bacteria such as meningococcal meningitis is generally more severe than is meningitis that is caused by viruses (aseptic). Viral/aseptic meningitis is more common than bacterial meningitis. Viral or aseptic meningitis is generally not life threatening, but bacterial meningitis may be, and must be treated with antibiotics. Preventive antibiotics are recommended for household or close contacts of people with some forms of bacterial meningitis such as meningococcal.

How is bacterial meningitis spread?

Meningitis is spread by respiratory droplets; through coughing, sneezing, kissing and sharing of kitchen utensils.

Are there general recommendations to avoid this and other infections?

Recommendations include the following:

- Practice good personal hygiene including frequent hand washing
- Do not share common eating utensils
- Do not allow people to kiss your baby on the mouth
- Cover your nose and mouth when sneezing or coughing

What should I do if somebody I know has symptoms of meningitis?

Advise the person to immediately see a doctor or go to the nearest emergency room.

Where can I get more information?

Contact your doctor or the Southern Nevada Health District, Office of Epidemiology at (702) 759-1300.



625 Shadow Lane | P.O. Box 3902
Las Vegas, NV 89127 | 702.759.1000
www.southernnevadahealthdistrict.org

Updated 8-06