



Viral Meningitis

Should there be a case of Viral Meningitis in your child's classroom, your child may be exposed.

What is Viral Meningitis?

Meningitis is an infection of the delicate linings that cover the brain and of the fluid in these linings. There are 2 types of Meningitis:

- Bacterial Meningitis is very serious and can be life threatening. It is caused by a number of different bacteria and needs urgent medical attention.
- Viral Meningitis is caused by one of three viruses and will get better by itself.

The symptoms for both types of Meningitis are the same.

What causes Viral Meningitis?

A number of different viruses can cause Viral Meningitis. Most of the commonly involved viruses reach their peak activity during the summer so infection is more common during the warmer months. Although the early symptoms are similar, Viral Meningitis is different to the much more serious and potentially lethal Bacterial Meningitis. Children and adults with Viral Meningitis can be quite ill but they will get better without any specific treatment.

What are the symptoms of Viral Meningitis?

It is very difficult for anyone other than a doctor to decide which type of Meningitis a child or adult has. The first symptoms are the same for both types of Meningitis.

- Symptoms often develop quickly and may include:
- High temperature
- Chills – shivering with a high temperature
- Severe headache
- Vomiting
- It hurts to move the head or neck
- The person may complain that light is hurting their eyes.

Many cases of Viral Meningitis are accompanied by a fine pink rash over the body. This may cause confusion, as it can resemble the rash found in the much more serious Bacterial Meningitis.

What should I do now?

Because it can be very difficult to distinguish between Viral Meningitis and the more serious Bacterial Meningitis, all children with symptoms of Meningitis need to be seen by a doctor immediately. Let your doctor know that the child has been in contact with a case of Viral Meningitis.

What should I do if I suspect Meningitis in my child?

If your child develops any of the symptoms of Meningitis, at any time, contact your doctor immediately. If you cannot contact your doctor quickly, bring your child to the nearest Casualty department (A&E).

Your doctor and local health clinic will be able to answer any further questions that you might have about Viral Meningitis.