

MENINGITIS

World Meningitis Day: April 24

Basics

- Inflammation of the meninges (the membranes that line the skull)
- *Infectious*: caused by viruses, bacteria, fungi, amoeba, or parasites. *Non-infectious*: drugs, head injury, cancers, etc.

Risk factors

- Extremes of age: Children < 5y., or adults >60 years
- Weakened immune system (e.g., type 2 diabetes, chronic kidney disease, cystic fibrosis, etc.), recent organ or bone marrow transplant, alcoholism, IV drug use, chemotherapy, recent exposure to others with meningitis

Symptoms

- Fever, headache, neck stiffness, fatigue, muscle pain, vomiting, nausea, sensitivity to light
- Altered mental status (irritability, sleepiness, confusion)



Prevention strategies

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Avoid mosquito and tick bites (which can transmit arboviruses especially during June - October) by wearing protective clothing, applying insect repellent to clothing, eradicating mosquito breeding sites, and avoiding areas known to harbor mosquitos or ticks.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after using the toilet or changing diapers since enteroviruses are usually spread by fecal-oral or respiratory routes. Enteroviruses account for approximately 90% of cases of viral meningitis.
- Avoid exposure to rodents, esp. rats, and house mice.
- See your physician if you develop symptoms as bacterial meningitis can cause serious complications, such as brain damage or hearing loss.