

MENINGITIS

FAQs for Parents



What is meningitis?

Meningitis is an inflammation of the tissues that cover the brain and spinal cord. Meningitis can be caused by various bacteria, viruses, fungi, or parasites.

How is meningitis spread?

Most cases of meningitis are caused by viruses. Most causes of viral meningitis are not spread easily. Viral meningitis is spread from person to person through close contact and unwashed hands. Bacterial meningitis can be caused by bacteria such as *Haemophilus*, *Streptococcus*, or *Neisseria meningitidis* which are spread by close contact with saliva or droplets from the nose and throat of an infected person.

Does everyone in the school need medication?

No. Most students and faculty in the school are not at an increased risk from casual contact and do not need medication. All identified close contacts will be individually notified by public health officials for medication recommendations. Medication is not needed for people in contact with someone with viral meningitis.

Does the school need to be cleaned/decontaminated after a case of meningitis?

No. The bacteria, such as *Neisseria meningitidis*, that can cause bacterial meningitis is spread directly from person to person instead of on objects like doorknobs or desks. The bacteria are found in warm, moist environments, such as people's noses and throats.

What can I do to prevent meningitis?

- ✓ Wash your hands often.
- ✓ Stay home when you are sick, especially with fever, cough, diarrhea, or sore throat.
- ✓ Stay up to date on childhood vaccinations.

