

Title: Meningitis: A Public Guide

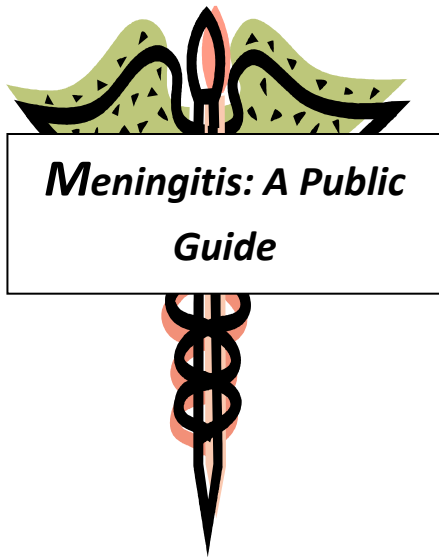
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Abstract: This handout describes the symptoms of meningitis in easy to understand language for the public. Helping the public understand the symptoms of meningitis will help aid in earlier diagnosis and intervention.

This document was created by a medical student enrolled in the Primary Care Clerkship at the University of Minnesota Medical School as part of the course project. The aim of the project is to present information on a medical topic in the format of a patient education handout. It does not necessarily reflect the views of the University of Minnesota Medical School physicians and faculty. These materials are provided for informational purposes only and are in no way intended to take the place of the advice and recommendations of your personal health care provider. The information provided may no longer be up to date since it has not been reviewed since the date of creation. The information provided should not be used to diagnose a health problem or disease, or as a means of determining treatment. In the event of a medical emergency, immediately contact a doctor or call 911.



Meningitis is a swelling and irritation of the covering of the brain. This disease can range from being felt as a mild headache, or can be a major illness that needs hospitalization. Most cases are of the mild type.



Causes

Most of the time meningitis is caused by a virus and does not require treatment. On rare occasions, it is caused by bacteria and can be fatal. Special tests by your doctor are needed to know the difference between the two. These tests involve collecting some of the fluid that surrounds the brain and looking closely at it for special indicators of disease.



Symptoms

Consider seeking medical attention if you or someone you know experiences any combination of these symptoms : moderate to severe headache, fever, neck pain, or confusion. If you suspect you or someone in your family has meningitis or any serious illness, do not hesitate to contact your doctor.



Staying Healthy

The key to avoiding meningitis is the same as with most other diseases that are spread from person to person. It is always important to get in the habit of good and frequent hand washing. Carry a bottle of hand alcohol wash for everyday occasions when you and your family are out in public. Keep yourself in good health by eating a varied diet rich in whole grains, fruits, and vegetables. See your doctor regularly for checkups and seek their help for maintaining your health.

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