

FREDERICK PUBLIC SCHOOLS

"Home of the Frederick Bombers"

Office of the Superintendent

Shannon Vanderburg, Superintendent

Meningitis Information

Meningitis

(Information from the Oklahoma State Department of Health)

Meningitis is a potentially severe or fatal disease caused by a bacteria, virus, or fungi causing inflammation of the tissues that cover the brain and spinal cord. Symptoms of meningitis may include fever, rash, headache, stiff neck, nausea, vomiting, and fatigue. Symptoms in infants may include irritability, lethargy, extreme fussiness, or refusal to eat. It is important to determine the cause of the meningitis for purposes of treatment and whether preventive treatment of persons who have had contact with respiratory fluids is needed. Since viral and bacterial meningitis often have similar symptoms, it is important to seek medical care immediately if you or your child has those symptoms.

Viral meningitis is the most common form of meningitis and can be caused by several different viruses. Approximately 90% of meningitis cases are viral meningitis. These viruses are typically spread from person-to-person through direct or indirect contact with fecal material, usually on unclean hands or contaminated environmental items. There is no specific treatment for viral meningitis, most patients will completely recover on their own with bed rest and plenty of fluids, however health care providers often will recommend medicine to relieve symptoms such as fever and headache.

Bacterial meningitis can be caused by bacteria such as *Streptococcus* species or *Neisseria meningitidis*, which are spread by direct contact with saliva or respiratory fluids from the nose and throat of an infected person. Bacterial meningitis is usually more severe and requires prompt treatment with antibiotics. **Meningococcal meningitis** is a serious form of bacterial meningitis caused by the bacteria *Neisseria meningitidis*, which also causes blood infections called meningococcal disease. Household members and other persons directly exposed to the respiratory fluids of a person with meningococcal meningitis are recommended to receive preventive antibiotics. Preventive antibiotics are not recommended for other types of meningitis.

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Two types of **meningococcal vaccine** are available to prevent four types (called serogroups) of *Neisseria meningitidis*, when given before being exposed. Meningococcal conjugate vaccine (MCV4) is the preferred vaccine for people 2 through 55 years of age. Meningococcal polysaccharide vaccine (MPSV4) is not used in children under 18 months of age, but may be used if MCV4 is not available. MPSV4 is the only meningococcal vaccine licensed for people older than 55.

Other routinely recommended **childhood vaccines** protect children from other causes of meningitis such as *Haemophilis influenzae* type b (Hib) and *Streptococcus pneumoniae*. These and other vaccines are available and are recommended for certain people at increased risk of complications from a bacterial infection such as elderly or immunocompromised persons or people living in certain group settings. For more information on vaccines, contact your local county health department or family physician.

Hand hygiene is the single most important action to prevent the spread of infection to others and to you. Wash visibly soiled hands with soap and water, after using the toilet, after changing diapers, after sneezing or coughing into your hands, and before preparing and eating food. Use alcohol based hand gels when hands are not visibly soiled.

For more Information and Fact Sheets regarding meningitis please visit the [meningitis section](#) of the Oklahoma State Department of Health.

The preceding was provided for information only as required by the Ok State Dept of Education.

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