



Genesee County Health Department

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DATE: September 24, 2015 **END DATE:** October 8, 2015
CONTACT: Christine Rygiel, MPH, MB (ASCP)
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RE: Viral Meningitis

The Genesee County Health Department has seen an increased presence in viral meningitis this season. Viral meningitis is an inflammation of the tissue that covers the brain and spinal cord. Viral meningitis is the most common type of meningitis, especially from summer to fall when the viruses spread more often. The Genesee County Health Department would like to make sure everyone stays healthy by providing the following information.

Viral meningitis is often less severe, causing fewer long-lasting problems when compared to bacterial meningitis. There are a large number of viruses that can cause meningitis, many of which are passed to others through coughing and sneezing. Viral meningitis can also be caused by the mumps virus, measles virus, varicella virus (chickenpox), influenza virus, and West Nile virus. You can get viral meningitis at any age. If you have close contact with an individual who has viral meningitis, you may become infected with the virus that made the individual sick, but you are not likely to develop meningitis as a complication of illness.

In most cases, there is no specific treatment for viral meningitis. Most individuals completely recover on their own within 7 to 10 days. Antibiotics do not help viral infections, so they are not

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useful in the treatment of viral meningitis. If you have the following symptoms, please consult your family physician:

Common Symptoms in Infants:

- Fever
- Irritability
- Poor Eating
- Sleepiness or trouble waking from sleep
- Lethargy (lack of energy)

Common Symptoms in Adults:

- Fever
- Headache
- Stiff neck
- Sensitivity to bright light
- Sleepiness or trouble waking from sleep
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Lack of appetite
- Lethargy (lack of energy)

You can protect yourself from viral meningitis by practicing the following:

- Practicing good hand hygiene and always washing your hands, especially after using the restroom, coughing or blowing your nose.
- Avoiding touching your face with unwashed hands.
- Avoiding close contact such as kissing, hugging, or sharing cups or eating utensils with people who are sick.
- Cleaning and disinfecting frequently touched surfaces, such as toys, door knobs, etc.
- Stay home if you are sick.
- Making sure you and your child are vaccinated on schedule. Measles, mumps, chickenpox, and influenza, if unprotected against the disease, can lead to viral meningitis.

The Genesee County Health Department wants you to stay healthy this season. Visit our website at www.gchd.us or visit <http://www.cdc.gov/meningitis/viral.html> for more viral meningitis resources and information. If you have not been fully vaccinated yet, we encourage you to do so. Our motto is “*Better Life Though Better Health.*”