

**McKinney Independent School District  
School Health Services**

**Viral Meningitis**

**GENERAL INFORMATION:** Meningitis is an illness in which there is inflammation of the tissues that cover the brain and spinal cord. Viral or "aseptic" meningitis, which is the most common type, is caused by an infection with one of several types of viruses. Meningitis can also be caused by infections with several types of bacteria or fungi.

**SYMPTOMS:** Viral meningitis is serious but rarely fatal in persons with normal immune systems. Usually, the symptoms last from 7 to 10 days, and the child recovers completely. Bacterial meningitis, on the other hand, can be very serious. The symptoms of viral meningitis and bacterial meningitis are the same. Therefore, if you think you or your child has meningitis, contact your health care provider as soon as possible.

**TREATMENT:** No specific treatment is available for viral meningitis. Most children completely recover on their own. Bed rest, plenty of fluids, and medication to relieve fever and headache will most likely be prescribed by your health care provider.

**CONTAGION:** Viral meningitis is most often spread through direct contact of an infected person. This usually happens by shaking hands with an infected person or touching something they have handled, and then rubbing your own nose or mouth. The virus can also be found in the stool of persons who are infected. The virus is spread through this route mainly among small children who are not yet toilet trained. It can also be spread this way to adults changing the diapers of an infected infant. The incubation period is usually between 3 and 7 days from the time you are infected until you develop symptoms. You can usually spread the virus to someone else beginning about 3 days after you are infected until about 10 days after you develop symptoms.

**COMMON CONCERNS:** The viruses that cause viral meningitis are contagious. Enteroviruses, for example, are most common during the summer and early fall, and many people are exposed to them. However, most infected persons either have no symptoms or develop only a cold or rash with low-grade fever. Only a small proportion of infected persons actually develop meningitis. Therefore, if you are around someone who has viral meningitis, you have a moderate chance of becoming infected, but a very small chance of developing meningitis.