60 SECONDS

One minute guide to...

VIRAL AND BACTERIAL MENINGITIS

What is Meningitis?

Meningitis is an infection caused by either a bacteria or virus of the protective membranes that surround the brain and the spinal cord (meninges).

Preventatively there are a number of vaccines available that offer some protection against meningitis: **https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/meningitis/vaccination/**

Viral Meningitis:

Viral meningitis is the **MOST** common type of meningitis in adults and older children. It can be caused by many different viruses, but the most common are the herpes simplex virus, chickenpox or shingles virus, and the enterovirus.

- **SYMPTOMS**:
  Viral meningitis presents with similar symptoms to bacterial meningitis such as fever, headache, dislike of lights and neck stiffness. Often there is a rash, but this is normally quite different to the rash seen in bacterial meningitis with meningococcal disease.
  Get help for your symptoms - call NHS 111 or your GP surgery for advice if you're not sure if it's anything serious.
- Viral meningitis is almost never life-threatening and mostly do not require antibiotics, but individuals with viral meningitis may feel quite unwell for a while after the illness, with symptoms of fatigues, headache, and anxiety.
- Viral meningitis is not passed on to others in close contact so household members or contacts do not need prophylactic treatment.

Bacterial Meningitis:

Bacterial meningitis is **LESS** common than viral, but it can still happen to anyone of any age and is a **life-threatening illness**. Many different bacteria can **cause meningitis** but bacterial meningitis can occur alongside **sepsis**, which is the more life threatening form of the disease and often involves the bacteria invading the blood as well. Sepsis can occur with or without bacterial meningitis.

- **The first symptoms** are often non-specific and include fever, vomiting, headache and feeling unwell. Limb pain, pale skin, and cold hands and feet often appear earlier than the rash, neck stiffness, dislike of bright lights and confusion.

- **Call 999** for an ambulance or go to A&E if you think you or someone could have meningitis or sepsis as symptoms can get a lot worse very quickly.
  You can also get online advice from/or by calling: **Get help for your symptoms - NHS 111**

- **Treatment:** It is important to know whether the cause is viral or bacterial as this will determine how to treat the patient. In bacterial meningitis antibiotics are essential.

Further Information:

From the NHS: https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/meningitis/
Meningitis Research Foundation: **https://www.meningitis.org/meningitis/causes/viral-meningitis**

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Cumberland Council

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Working for **Cumberland Council** and **Westmorland & Furness Council**