

# Meningitis

Meningitis is an infection of the meninges, which is the thin lining around the brain and spinal cord.



## Viral Meningitis

Viral meningitis is a complication from a viral illness and can occur from enteroviruses. It is spread through direct or indirect contact of body fluid from the infected person (saliva, snot, poo). It can also be transmitted through droplets (sneezing/coughing). Viral Meningitis is more common than bacterial and usually not as severe unless it has caused encephalitis (inflammation of the brain). Diseases that cause viral meningitis or encephalitis include measles, mumps and polio which can be prevented with immunisation.

## Treatment for Viral Meningitis

Antibiotics do not work, as this is caused by a virus. Viral Meningitis usually resolves by itself, between 7 – 10 days. Your child will be admitted to hospital for monitoring and tests to diagnose which meningitis they have and prophylactically given antibiotics until the result of the lumbar puncture is returned. Treatment is focused on keeping the child comfortable with pain relief, hydrated with good fluid intake, and rest. Most cases are mild, but on rare occasions can be life threatening or result in permanent disabilities.




## Bacterial Meningitis

Meningitis caused by a bacteria is known as bacterial meningitis, and the two most common bacteria that causes it is the meningococcus and pneumococcus. These bacteria is found in peoples nose or throat who are well (about 1 in 10 people will carry it). This can be very dangerous and can be fatal or lead to long term complications including brain damage, limb loss of deafness. Similar to viral meningitis, transmission occurs through contact or droplets of an infected person.

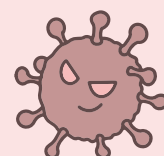
**Treatment:** Antibiotics are the treatment for the specific bacteria that has caused bacterial meningitis. They will also usually receive fluids and other medicines such as steroids and be admitted to hospital.

Bump to Bub First Aid

For more info on first aid, health and safety in children visit:

 [www.bumptobub.com.au](http://www.bumptobub.com.au)

 [@bumptobub\\_firstaid](https://www.instagram.com/bumptobub_firstaid)



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## Symptoms

As meningitis is a result from a viral or bacterial infection, symptoms vary depending on the initial illness that has caused this. Children do tend to get sick very quickly with this illness, and symptoms can occur within hours or days.

## Infant:

- irritability,
- lethargy/drowsiness,
- poor feeding,
- vomiting /diarrhoea
- fever or temperature instability (hot or cool)
- high pitched cry,
- bulging fontanelle (soft spot on head)
- apnoea (breath holding)
- seizures
- Non blanching rash (does not disappear when pressed)



## Child:

Same as infants, but may also present with:

- High fever
- Headache
- Stiff neck or neck pain
- Nausea and vomiting
- Photobia (dislike of bright lights)
- Loss of appetite
- Irritability
- Drowsiness/lethargy
- Confusion



## Additional information:

Keep children home until well and if bacterial, they must have completed their full course of antibiotics as well.

Vaccines have significantly reduced the incidence of bacterial meningitis (HIB vaccine, Pneumococcal Vaccine, Meningococcal ACWY + B)  
Group B Streptococci (GBS, tested late pregnancy) is a common organism for bacterial meningitis a newborn

## References

- Kids Health Information : Meningitis ([rch.org.au](http://rch.org.au))
- Clinical Practice Guidelines : Meningitis and encephalitis ([rch.org.au](http://rch.org.au))
- Meningitis in Children ([health.qld.gov.au](http://health.qld.gov.au))
- Meningitis (all types) | Health and wellbeing | Queensland Government ([www.qld.gov.au](http://www.qld.gov.au))