



# MENINGITIS

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Meningitis is an infection of the fluid that surrounds a person's spinal cord and brain. Symptoms of meningitis are easily mistaken for the flu and include high fever, headache and stiff neck. Other symptoms may include nausea, vomiting, sensitivity in looking at bright light, confusion, seizures, sleepiness or difficulty waking up.

**There are two types of meningitis:** viral and bacterial. Determining whether meningitis is viral or bacterial is important because the severity of illness and the treatment differ. Viral meningitis is generally less severe and resolves without specific treatment, while bacterial meningitis can be quite severe and may result in brain damage, hearing loss, learning disability, or even death. For bacterial meningitis, it is also important to know which type of bacteria is causing the meningitis, because antibiotics can prevent some types from spreading and infecting other people.

Early diagnosis, identifying the source of the infection, and treatment are very important. If symptoms occur, the patient should see their health care provider immediately. Testing of spinal fluid for bacteria identification is important in order to treat with the correct antibiotics. It is very important that treatment be started early in the course of the infection.

Some forms of bacterial meningitis are contagious and spread through the exchange of respiratory and throat secretions (i.e., coughing, kissing). People in close contact with a person with meningitis may need to receive antibiotics to prevent them from getting the disease. College students, especially those who live in dormitories, are at higher risk for meningitis and should be educated about the availability of a safe and effective vaccine, which can decrease their risk. The meningococcal vaccine is recommended by The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the American Academy of Pediatrics.

For more information on meningitis and the meningitis immunization, please contact your health care professional at the **Cresco Medical Clinic** at (563) 547-2022, toll free 1-888-547-5474, or the **Lime Springs Medical Clinic & Pharmacy** at (563) 566-2243, toll free 1-800-593-5463.

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