

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Joint Press Release #3

Date: September 29, 2017

RE: Viral Meningitis in Lassen County

This Press Release is solely for educational purposes about viral and bacterial meningitis and their differences. There is NO indication that there are any bacterial meningitis cases in Lassen County at this time. This is also to help clarify information that is spreading through the community.

According to the National Meningitis Association, meningitis is most often caused by either a virus or one of several types of bacteria:

- Viral meningitis has similar symptoms to bacterial meningitis, but for the most part is neither as deadly nor as debilitating. There is no specific treatment available for viral meningitis, but most patients fully recover in 7-10 days.
- Bacterial forms of meningitis can be extremely dangerous and fast-moving and have the greatest potential for being fatal. The long-term effects of bacterial meningitis can include multiple amputations, hearing loss and kidney damage. Many (but not all) forms of bacterial meningitis can be prevented by vaccination.

It is very important to see a healthcare provider right away if you think you or your child might have symptoms of meningitis; a doctor can determine if you have meningitis, the type of meningitis, and the best treatment.

According to Dr. Hal Meadows, the Chief Medical Officer for Banner Lassen Medical Center, "appropriate precautions are being taken to ensure the safety of our patients and the public. All patients who have been preliminarily diagnosed with viral meningitis are receiving prophylactic antibiotics until bacterial meningitis has been ruled out by laboratory testing, as recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and UC Davis infectious disease consultants."

Banner Health has provided two fact sheets about meningitis that are attached to this Release. To reiterate, there is NO indication that there are any cases of bacterial meningitis in Lassen County.

The following steps can help lower the risk of getting infected or spreading viral meningitis to other people. Hand washing helps prevent infection. Hands should be washed with soap and water:

- ◆ After using the toilet
- ◆ After sneezing or coughing
- ◆ After changing diapers
- ◆ Before handling food or drink
- ◆ Before eating

Avoid sharing things that may have another person's saliva on them, such as eating utensils, drinking containers, and cigarettes. In settings like child care centers, washing objects and surfaces with a diluted bleach solution (1/4 cup of household bleach mixed with one gallon of water) is an effective way to destroy the virus.

If you are sick stay home, this is the best way to prevent the spread any illness.

The call center for community members, who are need of information regarding this situation, is staffed 24 hours a day. The phone number is (530) 252-2300.

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Banner Health.

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Meningitis

Meningitis is inflammation of the lining around the brain and spinal cord. It's most often caused by germs that infect the fluid and lining.

- Bacterial meningitis (caused by bacteria) is a serious illness that can lead to lasting problems. These include brain damage, hearing loss, and paralysis. When not treated quickly, it can be fatal, sometimes within days.
- Viral meningitis (caused by a virus) is less serious than bacterial meningitis. Most people get better with supportive treatment.

What are the risk factors for meningitis?

Anyone can get this condition. These people are at greatest risk:

- Children younger than 5
- Older adults
- People who have had their spleen removed
- People who are more likely to come in contact with meningitis germs (such as children in daycare, students in college dorms, and soldiers in military housing)

How does meningitis spread?

- Droplets. Meningitis germs spread through the air in droplets when an infected person coughs, sneezes, laughs, or talks. You can breathe in the germs. Or, your hands can transfer the germs to your eyes, nose, or mouth.
- Person-to-person. You can come in contact with the germs if you share food, a drinking glass, eating utensils, or a toothbrush with an infected person. Meningitis germs can also be spread through kissing.
- Direct spread. The germs that cause meningitis can spread to the brain and spinal cord from an infection in another part of the body, such as the sinuses or ears.
- Fecal-oral. People infected with viral meningitis have the virus in their stool. If they don't wash their hands well after using the bathroom, they can spread the germs to objects, such as telephones and doorknobs. If you touch the same objects, you can pick up the germs and then transfer them to your mouth.

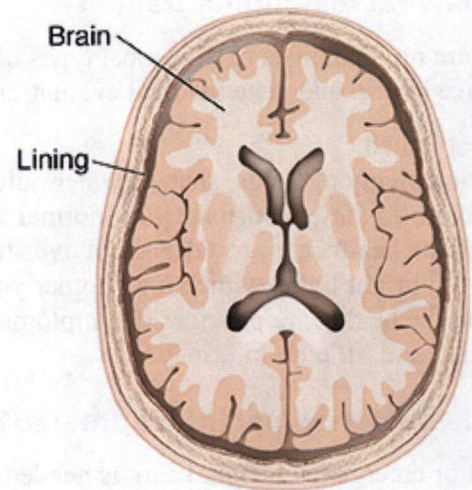
What are the symptoms of meningitis?

Viral and bacterial meningitis share many of the same symptoms. Symptoms start suddenly in both. You won't know which type of meningitis you have, so act quickly. Call your healthcare provider right away if you have a severe headache with any of the following:

- Stiff neck
- Fever
- Confusion
- Sleepiness
- Seizures
- Sensitivity to light
- Nausea and vomiting

Note: Small children, the elderly, and occasional other people may not have headaches as an early symptoms of meningitis. Unexplained confusion even without headache can occasionally be due to meningitis.

View from the top



How is meningitis diagnosed?

The following are tests used to diagnose meningitis:

- Lumbar puncture (spinal tap). This is the best way to diagnose meningitis. The healthcare provider first injects a numbing medicine to ease pain. Then, a needle is inserted into the back to take a small sample of the fluid that surrounds the brain and spine.
- Imaging tests. CT scans or MRI scans of the brain may be done to look for swelling and inflammation. Other CT scans and X-rays may be done to look for a source of the infection.

How is viral meningitis treated?

There are no medicines to treat most types of viral meningitis. It often resolves on its own in about a week. After you have had an adequate medical evaluation the following may help your symptoms:

- Rest in bed.
- Drink plenty of fluids, such as water, juice, and warm soup, to prevent dehydration. A good rule is to drink enough so that you urinate your normal amount.
- Ask the healthcare provider about over-the-counter drugs for headache and fever.
- Avoid bright lights, which may bother your eyes.
- Call the healthcare provider if symptoms worsen or there are signs of dehydration, such as a dry mouth, intense thirst, and little or no urination.

How is bacterial meningitis treated?

Urgent or emergency hospital care is needed for bacterial meningitis. In the hospital, fluids and antibiotics are given through an IV (intravenous) line. Medicine to reduce inflammation may also be given. When symptoms are severe, a tube to aid breathing may be needed.

Vaccines for bacterial meningitis

There are several different vaccines for different types of bacterial meningitis.

The *Haemophilus influenzae* type b (Hib) vaccine prevents meningitis caused by a type of bacteria called *Haemophilus influenzae* type b. It is recommended for all children younger than 5 years old. It is usually given to infants starting at 2 months of age as a series.

Pneumococcal bacteria can also cause meningitis. The pneumococcal conjugate vaccine, PCV13, protects against the 13 types that cause the most severe pneumococcal infections. PCV13 is given to infants and toddlers, but may be given to older children as well. A dose is also recommended to older children who are at high risk. Another vaccine, PPSV23, is given to older children with certain chronic medical conditions.

Another type of meningitis is meningococcal meningitis. Vaccination is recommended beginning in children at age 11 through the age of 18. Catch-up vaccines may be given to those older than 18. College freshmen living in dormitories are one group at high risk. Vaccination is also recommended for those at high-risk beginning at age 2 months through 10 years. High-risk infants and children include those:

- With specific medical conditions:
 - Complement component deficiencies (immune system condition with increased risk of serious infections)
 - Functional or anatomic asplenia (meaning that the spleen does not work effectively or has been removed), including those with sickle cell disease
- Who live in an area where there is a meningococcal disease outbreak
- Who travel to areas where meningococcal diseases is common or where there is an outbreak

To help prevent meningitis

Here are some tips to follow:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water. If you can't wash your hands, use an alcohol-based hand gel containing at least 60% alcohol.

- Avoid sharing personal items, such as food, drinking glasses, eating utensils, or towels.
- If you have had close contact with someone who has meningitis, ask your healthcare provider whether you should take antibiotics to prevent infection.

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Viral Meningitis in Children

Meningitis is an infection or inflammation of the membrane and fluid around the brain and spinal cord. Viral meningitis is caused by a virus. It may start as another illness, such as the stomach flu. It most often happens in children younger than 5 years of age. It is not the same as bacterial meningitis, which is a serious illness caused by bacteria. Bacterial meningitis needs to be treated with antibiotics right away. Viral meningitis is often mild. It will go away with no treatment.

Symptoms of meningitis

Viral meningitis is not an emergency. But the symptoms are often the same as bacterial meningitis. You won't know which one your child has. Seek medical care immediately if your child has any of these symptoms:

- Fever over 100.4°F (38.0°C) (in a baby less than 2 months of age)
- Severe headache that doesn't go away
- Stiff neck (arching back or neck in infants)
- Nausea or vomiting with headache
- Sleepiness; difficulty waking up
- Irritability; dislike of being handled
- Bruise-like rash or splotchy skin
- Sensitivity to light
- No appetite

Note: If a newborn or infant is irritable, very sleepy, or eats poorly, have the child checked by a healthcare provider right away, even if there is no fever.

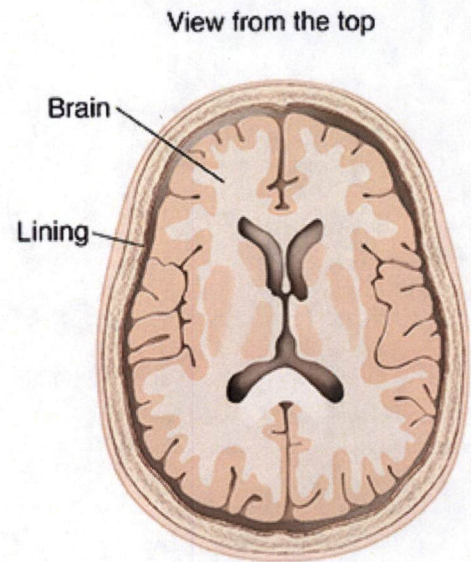
Diagnosing meningitis

Tests are done to diagnose meningitis. The tests can show if it is bacterial or viral. The tests include:

- Spinal tap. A sample of spinal fluid is taken from the spinal canal located in the lower back. It is checked for signs of bacteria or viruses. This is the definitive test for meningitis.
- Imaging tests. These may include a computed tomography (CT) or magnetic resonance imaging (MRI). These tests look for areas of swelling and inflammation.

Treating viral meningitis

Viral meningitis often goes away on its own in about 10 days. Medicines may be used to treat the symptoms associated with viral meningitis, such as headache or pain medicines, antinausea medicines, or intravenous fluids. These are to help keep your child more comfortable. Depending on the cause of your child's viral meningitis, the healthcare provider may prescribe certain antiviral medicines. When your child has recovered, you may need to take him or her to the healthcare provider. This is to check for problems with vision, hearing, movement, and mental function.



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