

HEALTH TIPS FOR FALL 2011



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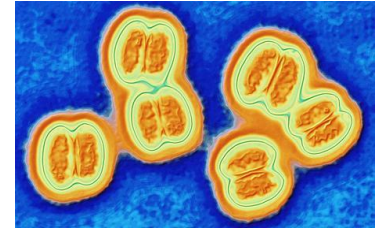
WHAT IS MENINGITIS?

- Meningitis is an infection of the layers of tissue which cover the brain (known as the meninges).
- Thus the name meningitis.
- It can be a life threatening condition because of it is so near to the brain and spinal cord.
- It is classified as a medical emergency.
- **Viral meningitis** is **not** a life threatening disease and most patients recover from it without any long term effects.



WHAT CAUSES MENINGITIS?

- Meningitis can be caused by:
viruses, bacteria, fungi, parasites
- Many kinds of bacteria can cause meningitis but the most serious is the organism known as the meningococcus.
- It can also be caused by a penetrating injury or trauma to the head.
- It is sometimes considered a secondary infection as it often travels to the meninges from an infection in another part of the body such as an ear infection.



WHO GETS MENINGITIS?

- Although anyone can get meningitis, it is seen more frequently in:
 - Preteens and adolescents – because their earlier immunizations have worn off.
 - College freshman – because they live together in dormitories in nearness to one another.
 - Travelers – to countries where meningitis is prevalent
 - Persons with weak immune systems



COLLEGE FRESHMAN





SYMPTOMS

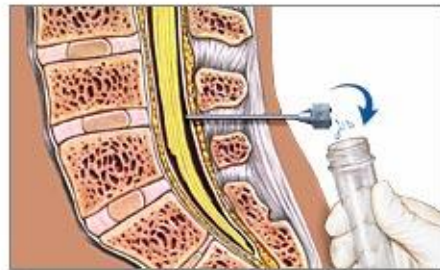


- Headache, stiff neck, fever
- Confusion, decreased consciousness
- Vomiting
- Inability to tolerate light or loud noises
- In small children, nonspecific changes, such as irritability and drowsiness.
- Skin rash is present with meningococcal meningitis.



DIAGNOSIS

- The gold standard for diagnosing meningitis is the spinal tap (lumbar puncture)



Spinal fluid
is collected
for testing



DIAGNOSIS, (cont).

- The spinal fluid is usually crystal clear but will usually be milky white in meningitis.
- The organism (bacteria) can be grown out to see which antibiotic will cure it.
- The normal amount of sugar in the spinal fluid will be decreased by the severity of the disease.

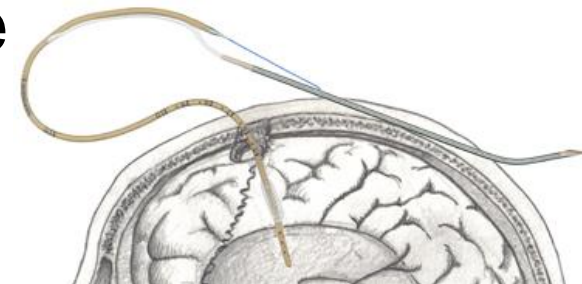




TREATMENT



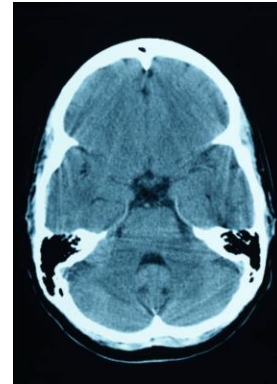
- Hospital admission to an ICU
- Wide coverage IV antibiotics until the causative organism is determined, then antibiotics specific to the causative agent
- IV fluids for shock, low blood pressure and administration of IV antibiotics
- Other possible treatments may include a respirator, drugs to reduce the pressure in the brain and drugs for seizures.
- Drainage of spinal fluid in the event that there is an increase in spinal fluid pressure





COMPLICATIONS

- Total body infection with low blood pressure, fast heart rate, high or low body temperature and rapid breathing
- Excessive blood clotting (disseminated intravascular coagulation aka DIC)
- Excessive bleeding, hemorrhaging of the adrenal gland
- Gangrene of the arms and legs subsequent to the rash of meningococcal meningitis
- Severe brain swelling leading to seizures, loss of consciousness
- Death





PREVENTION



- After reading about this horrible disease, our major goal would certainly be prevention whenever possible!
- This can be accomplished through vaccination.
- Vaccines are available for meningococcal, pneumococcal and H.influenza meningitis.
- Persons who have had their spleens removed particularly need to be immunized.
- Check with your primary care health provider to see if you are a candidate for immunization.
- Persons exposed to meningitis should also take a medication that may prevent them from getting the disease.



