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Medical review Drugs.com. Last updated on February 25, 2020. What is meningitis? Meningitis is an inflammation of the coatings (meninges) of the brain and spinal cord. It is most often caused by a viral or bacterial infection. Other infectious agents such as fungi can also cause meningitis. Rare causes of meningitis include atypical drug reactions and systemic lupus erythematosus. Viral, or aseptic, meningitis is the most common type. Generally, viral meningitis is not directly contagious. Anyone can get viral meningitis, but it happens most often in children. Many different viruses can cause meningitis; enterovirus is usually the usual culprit. Viral meningitis due to enterovirus peaks in midsummer until early autumn. But it can happen at any time of the year. With the exception of a rare case of herpes meningitis, viral meningitis will resolve itself after 7-10 days. Bacterial meningitis, formerly called cerebrospinal meningitis, is a very serious and potentially fatal infection. It may affect very healthy people, but infants and seniors are more susceptible. In the past, the three most common types of bacterial meningitis have been caused by neisseria meningitidis, hemophilus influenzae and streptococcal pneumonia. Now that we have a very effective vaccine to help prevent all three types, bacterial meningitis in otherwise healthy children and adults occurs less frequently. In addition to infants and the elderly, people with chronic diseases and/or immune system disorders are most at risk of developing meningitis caused by bacteria and fungi. Symptoms of meningitis vary, but often include: Headache Fever Stiff Neck Other symptoms may include: Sensitivity to light Nausea Vomiting Drowsiness Confusion May be Milder in Cases of Viral Meningitis, while in cases of bacterial meningitis, symptoms can occur quite suddenly. In very young children, the symptoms can be particularly difficult to detect. Babies with meningitis may be less active, vomiting, refusing to eat or being irritable. A person in the later stages of bacterial meningitis may have seizures and lose consciousness (as a result). Meningitis diagnosis is diagnosed by testing some of the fluid that surrounds the spinal cord for pathogenic bacteria or infection of combat cells. This fluid is removed from the spinal cord using a needle in a procedure known as a spinal tap or lumbar puncture. The expected duration of viral meningitis is usually better on its own in 7 to 10 days. In contrast, if bacterial meningitis is not diagnosed and treated early, it can lead to permanent disability or death. The length of time that medication for bacterial meningitis depends on the age of the person, the response to medication and other factors. Prevention of bacteria and viruses that cause meningitis are found in bodily fluids such as saliva and mucus, and are spread through direct contact. Some people carry germs in and throat and can pass them on to other people, even if those carriers are not sick. If you are in close contact with someone who has been diagnosed with bacterial meningitis, you can get antibiotics to prevent you from getting the disease. Vaccination against streptococcal pneumonia (pneumonia shot), hemophilus flu and Neisseria meningitidis is the best way to prevent bacterial meningitis. There is no vaccine to prevent common types of viral meningitis. Treatment for viral meningitis is treated in the same way as the flu, with rest and plenty of fluids, and you should recover in a week to 10 days. Bacterial meningitis is a medical emergency. This requires high doses of intravenous antibiotics in hospital settings. Depending on the patient and the suspected type of bacterial meningitis, intravenous dexamethasone, corticosteroid, can be given at the time of diagnosis. When you call a professional if you or your child shows symptoms of meningitis, see your doctor immediately. The prognosis for people with viral meningitis, the prospects are excellent. The prognosis for bacterial meningitis depends on the age of the person, which bacterium causes the disease, and how early the disease has been diagnosed. Up to 10% of people with the disease will die, and a larger percentage of survivors have long-term effects such as hearing loss or neurological problems. Learn more about Meningitis Associate DrugsMay Clinic Reference Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) More informationAll consult with your health care provider to make sure that the information displayed on this page relates to your personal circumstances. Medical failure of meningitis is inflammation of the membranes that surround the brain and spinal cord. Meningitis can also be associated with inflammation of the brain tissue itself, known as encephalitis. Meningitis can be caused by infections of various viruses, bacteria, fungi and parasites. It may also be associated with noncommunicable diseases. Diseases and conditions that can lead to widespread inflammation of the body's tissues without infection, such as lupus, can cause aseptic (non-bacterial) meningitis. Some medications may also cause noncommunicable or aseptic meningitis. Characteristic symptoms and signs of meningitis include headache, fever and stiff neck. There is usually a painful sensitivity to light, known as photophobia. Related symptoms may include nausea, vomiting, and behavior changes like confusion, drowsiness, and difficulty waking up. RELATED: Casper, D.L., et al, eds. Harrison Principles of Internal Medicine, 19th Ed. USA: McGraw-Hill Education, 2015. CONTINUE SCROLLING FOR RELATED SLIDESHOW There are vaccines for some - but not all - forms of meningitis. While you can get a vaccine specifically for viral meningitis, you can get prevent viral infections that cause meningitis, including mumps and measles. Not keeping up with vaccination schedules for mumps, measles and other viruses can increase your chances of getting meningitis from these diseases. But there are vaccines for bacteria that cause meningococcal and pneumococcal meningitis. There are two types of vaccine against pneumococcal infection that causes pneumococcal meningitis. There are two types of vaccines for bacteria, which cause meningococcal disease: MenB, which protects against neisseria meningitidis bacteria such as BMenACWY, which protects against Neisseria meningitidis bacteria types A, C, W-135, and Y The CDC recommends all children between the ages of 11 and 12 to receive the MenACWY vaccine and then the booster dose at age 16. (6) The CDC also suggests that teens receive the MenB vaccine. (7) MenB and MenACWY vaccines are recommended for adults with an increased risk of meningococcal disease. Where can I get a meningitis vaccine? Your primary care physician may give you vaccines, but you can also get them at Walmart and in pharmacy chains like Walgreens and CVS. How much does the meningitis vaccine cost? Most health insurance plans cover these vaccines, but if you don't have health insurance, the average cost of vaccines that prevent meningococcal disease: About \$135 per MenB About \$175 per dose for two shots MenACWY The CDC runs a program called the Vaccines for Children Program (VFC), which helps make vaccination possible for children whose parents or guardians can't afford it. Medicare will cover vaccines against pneumococcal meningitis. Medicaid can help you cover the meningococcal meningitis vaccine, but it varies by state. Is it necessary to receive a meningitis vaccine? It is mandatory for some students to get a vaccine against meningococcal disease, but it depends on what condition you live in. Many states require meningococcal disease vaccines to be administered before going to college and sometimes before enrolling in high school or high school. But 17 states don't need vaccination. (8) Meningitis in all its forms is a serious and potentially fatal disease, so it is important to fully understand the symptoms as well as treatment and prevention options. These websites, talks and reported stories can help: Vaccination Information Vaccination may not prevent viral or fungal meningitis, but it can prevent bacterial meningitis. General Information Meningitis Now this UK charity, founded by a man who has lost a son to meningitis, raises awareness as well as money for research, and supports those affected by the disease. Information about the disease and its consequences is very clear and reliable. The Research Foundation is another UK charity site with detailed but very clear information about the disease. College Meningococcal Meningococcal Cancer The National Meningitis Association, between 2013 and 2016, experienced outbreaks of meningococcal serogroup B on one campus, a student died and on another, a student had to have both legs amputated. At the time of writing, there have been two recent outbreaks of meningococcal disease on two different college campuses: one on the East Coast (involving two students on one campus and the other on a nearby campus) and one on the West Coast (involving six students). Meningococcal disease is not synonymous with meningococcal meningitis. Meningococcal disease is an umbrella term for describing diseases caused by the bacteria Neisseria meningococcal, of which meningitis is one. The National Meningitis Association has a page that includes a map of recent outbreaks. The CDC provides vaccination statistics and information for people at increased risk of meningitis from the outbreak. In September 2016, in a blog post on the Scientific American website, Dr. Utibe Effiong, MD, explores why outbreaks on campus still occur when a vaccine is readily available. One reason: At least 12 states still do not require vaccination. Receiving Personal Living Beyond Limits: Amy's TED Talk, Meningitis Survivor In This TED Talk, given in May 2011 in Orange County, California, Amy talks about how she struggled with losing both legs below the knee due to bacterial meningitis and then became a snowboarder. In addition, which also lost a spleen, kidney and hearing in her left ear, was a record contestant on Dancing With the Stars paired with Derek Hough. My Story for Vaccines: A TED Talk by Utibe Effiong, MD In this TED talk given in Berlin in 2014, Dr. Effiong, a survivor of meningitis in college, talks about the importance of vaccines in developing countries. More Good Stories (Print Edition) Are you strangely obsessed, or living in fear, germs? These three articles delve into the mysteries of mushrooms among us: Death Dust, by Dana Goodyear for The New Yorker, January 24, 2014. The Mysterious Mushroom Infects American Southwest, by Madeleine Thomas for the Atlantic, August 8, 2014. How to seriously outbreak fungal meningitis? Marissa Fessenden for Scientific American, October 11, 2012. 2012.

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