

## Meningitis

**Definition:** Meningitis is a disease caused by the inflammation of the protective membranes covering the brain and spinal cord known as the meninges. The inflammation is usually caused by an infection of the fluid surrounding the brain and spinal cord. Bacterial meningitis is usually more severe. While most people with meningitis recover, it can cause serious complications, such as brain damage, hearing loss, or learning disabilities. Viral meningitis is generally less severe and resolves without specific treatment.

**Transmission:** It can spread through the exchange of respiratory and throat secretions. The bacteria are not spread by casual contact or by simply breathing the air where a person with meningitis has been

**Symptoms:** Meningitis infection may show up in a person by a sudden onset of fever, headache, and stiff neck. It will often have other symptoms, such as

- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Increased sensitivity to light (photophobia)
- Altered mental status (confusion)

### **Exposure: Criteria for EMS**

1. **Mouth to mouth resuscitation**
2. **Intubation**
3. **Suctioning**
4. **Slash Vomitus**
5. **Greater than 8 hours of contact**

**Precautions and PPE considerations:** Gloves and mask should be used if you suspect Meningitis. Masking the patient would also be acceptable. An exposure needs to have a transfer of respiratory or throat secretions.

**Treatments:** Bacterial meningitis can be treated effectively with antibiotics. **It is important that treatment be started as soon as possible.** Appropriate antibiotic treatment of the most common types of bacterial meningitis should reduce the risk of dying from meningitis to below 15%, although the risk remains higher among young infants and the elderly. There is no specific treatment for viral meningitis. Antibiotics do not help viral infections, so they are not useful in the treatment of viral meningitis. Most patients completely recover on their own within 7 to 10 days

**Work Guidelines:** Personnel will be evaluated for an exposure. If deemed an exposure the personnel will be sent to a physician for antibiotic treatment and evaluation.