**TREATMENT**

Viral meningitis cannot be helped by antibiotics and treatment is based on good nursing care. Recovery is normally complete, but headaches, tiredness and depression may persist for weeks or even months.

**CAUSES**

The commonest causes of viral meningitis are coxsackie and echoviruses (often known as enteroviruses). Meningitis can also develop as a result of infection with herpes simplex, measles, polio or chickenpox. Meningitis used to be a complication of mumps, but has virtually been eliminated following the introduction of the MMR (Measles, Mumps and Rubella) vaccine.

**COXSACKIE**

These viruses are the commonest causes of viral meningitis and they can be found in the intestines of humans, and therefore in faces and sewage-polluted water. Most cases occur in the summer months.

**HERPES SIMPLEX**

The herpes virus is widespread and usually produces cold sores, but can very occasionally cause viral meningitis or encephalitis, which is inflammation of the brain itself.

**VIRAL MENINGITIS**

Viral meningitis is more common than the bacterial form, but generally less serious although it can be very debilitating. It can be caused by many different viruses. Some are spread between people by coughing or sneezing, or through poor hygiene. Others can be found in sewage-polluted water. The incubation period can be up to three weeks.

In mild cases of viral meningitis, people may not even go to their doctor. Therefore it is difficult to say exactly how many cases there are of viral meningitis. The symptoms can be similar to the bacterial form and someone with a severe case of viral meningitis will need to be admitted to hospital for tests to find out which form they are suffering from. Diarrhoea can also occur with mild viral meningitis.

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