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CONTACT: Phoebe Leung
PHONE: (209) 558-7116

Viral Meningitis in Riverbank Students

STANISLAUS COUNTY –The Health Services Agency reports two (2) cases of viral meningitis in Riverbank students. The 11-year-old and 14-year-old brothers were hospitalized. One was discharged today. The Riverbank school system notified parents on Friday, September 14th. Dr. John Walker, County Public Health Officer, said that, “This is the mildest and most common form of meningitis in our county. During the past seven years we have averaged 78 cases per year. We are not aware of any deaths reported during that period. This is not the form of meningitis for which antibiotics are prescribed and unusually resolves with supportive medical care.” Attached is an informational flyer regarding viral meningitis.

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Viral Meningitis (Nonbacterial Meningitis)

- **What is viral meningitis?**

Viral meningitis is an infection of the meninges (a thin lining covering the brain and spinal cord) by any one of a number of different viruses. It is a fairly common disease; almost all of the cases occur as single, isolated events. Outbreaks are rare. Viral meningitis is most always non-fatal.
- **Who gets viral meningitis?**

Anyone can get viral meningitis but it occurs most often in children.
- **Which viruses cause this form of meningitis?**

Approximately half of the cases in the United States are due to common entero (intestinal) viruses. Occasionally, children will have viral meningitis associated with mumps or herpes virus infection.
- **How are the viruses that cause viral meningitis spread?**

These viruses are mainly spread by hand contact or respiratory secretions. The viruses can also be spread by items (i.e.; toys) contaminated with fecal/urine material.
- **What are the symptoms?**

The symptoms may include fever, headache, stiff neck and fatigue. Rash, sore throat and intestinal symptoms may also occur. If you or someone you know has these symptoms, you should consult with a physician. In most cases these symptoms will lessen and persons will completely recover.
- **How soon do symptoms appear?**

Symptoms generally appear within one week of exposure.
- **Is a person with viral meningitis contagious?**

Some of the enteroviruses that cause viral meningitis are contagious; fortunately, most people exposed to these viruses experience mild or no symptoms. Most people are exposed to these viruses at some time in their lives, but few actually develop meningitis.
- **How can transmission be prevented?**

Wash hands before meals, after going to the toilet, after changing diapers, and after wiping your nose.
- **Should a person with viral meningitis be isolated?**

Strict isolation is not necessary. Since most cases are due to enteroviruses that may be passed in the stool, people diagnosed with viral meningitis should be instructed to thoroughly wash their hands after using the toilet. Proper hand washing and diaper changing procedures should always be followed.
- **How is viral meningitis treated?**

There are no specific medicines or antibiotics used to treat viral meningitis. In most cases, persons will completely recover with no lasting ill effects.

For additional information, you may contact the Stanislaus County Health Services Agency - Public Health Services, Communicable Disease Control at (209) 558-5678.



Health
Services
Agency

Stanislaus County Health Services Agency
Public Health Services
820 Scenic Drive
Modesto, CA 95350