



Update on Viral Meningitis Cases in McLennan County

City of Bellmead

City of Beverly Hills

City of Bruceville-Eddy

City of Crawford

City of Gholson

City of Golinda

City of Hallsburg

City of Hewitt

City of Lacy-Lakeview

City of Leroy

City of Lorena

City of Mart

City of McGregor

City of Moody

City of Riesel

City of Robinson

City of Ross

City of Waco

City of West

City of Woodway

McLennan County

(May 15, 2015) Even though viral meningitis is not a reportable condition a significant increase in the frequency of cases has been noted locally. Working with area hospitals, spinal fluid from recent cases collected from April 1 to April 23, 2015 were submitted to the CDC for viral identification. Testing determined that 13 of the 15 samples from McLennan County were identified as echovirus 30, a subtype of enterovirus. The Health District is currently investigating these cases to further understand this cluster and promote public health disease prevention and control.

Echovirus 30

In the United States most cases of viral meningitis are due to enteroviruses. This is a group of viruses that includes enterovirus species, coxsackievirus, echovirus and others. Echoviruses are predominantly organisms of the gastrointestinal tract with transmission by the fecal oral route. Limited transmission takes place by respiratory exposure. The vast majority of echovirus infections are asymptomatic. When symptomatic infection does occur, it typically results in a mild nonspecific viral syndrome that may include upper respiratory symptoms, fever, sore throat, mouth sores or rash. Very few echovirus infections actually result in meningitis. Someone who has close contact with a person who has viral meningitis may become infected with the virus; however that person is not likely to develop meningitis.

With this increase in echovirus meningitis cases occurring in the community the implication is that the number of asymptomatic and mild echovirus infections must be very high. Considering that the incidence of enterovirus infections including echoviruses usually peaks in summer months, further cases of viral meningitis are likely to occur.

Prevention

There are no vaccines to protect against non-polio enteroviruses, which are the most common cause of viral meningitis, but the following are effective in preventing the spread of viral infections.

- Wash hands often with soap and water, especially after changing diapers, using the toilet, or coughing or blowing one's nose. Enteroviruses are not killed as effectively with alcohol (hand sanitizer) as they are with soap and water especially for young children who are the source of many enteroviral infections.
- Avoid touching the face with unwashed hands.
- Avoid close contact such as kissing, hugging, or sharing cups or eating utensils with people who are sick.
- Cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue or upper shirt sleeve, not hands.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces, such as toys and doorknobs, especially if someone is sick.
- Stay home when sick.
- People with viral meningitis may return to school and work once they are fever-free. Careful hand washing remains important for several weeks because viral shedding may persist.
- Isolation is reserved for epidemic bacterial meningitis and is not required for viral meningitis.

Information regarding bacterial, fungal, parasitic, and viral meningitis can be found below:

CDC has a an abundance of information on bacterial, fungal, parasitic, and viral meningitis:

<http://www.cdc.gov/meningitis/index.htm>.