



ENCEPHALITIS

WHAT IS ENCEPHALITIS?

ENCEPHALITIS IS AN IRRITATION AND SWELLING OF THE BRAIN, USUALLY CAUSED BY INFECTIONS.

WHAT CAUSES ENCEPHALITIS?

ENCEPHALITIS IS MOST OFTEN CAUSED BY A VIRAL INFECTION, AND MANY TYPES OF VIRUSES MAY CAUSE IT INCLUDING ARBOVIRUSES, COXSACKIEVIRUS, POLIOVIRUS, ECHOVIRUS, HERPES SIMPLEX INFECTION, VARICELLA (CHICKENPOX OR SHINGLES), MEASLES, MUMPS, RUBELLA, ADENOVIRUS, RABIES, EASTERN EQUINE ENCEPHALITIS VIRUS, AND WEST NILE VIRUS.

HOW IS ENCEPHALITIS SPREAD?

INFECTION OCCURS THROUGH INSECT BITES, EATING OR DRINKING INFECTED FOOD OR DRINKS, INHALING RESPIRATORY DROPLETS FROM AN INFECTED PERSON, OR THROUGH SKIN CONTACT.

HOW COMMON IS ENCEPHALITIS?

ENCEPHALITIS IS UNCOMMON. THE ELDERLY, INFANTS, AND PEOPLE WITH WEAK IMMUNE SYSTEMS ARE MORE LIKELY TO BE INFECTED AND HAVE A MORE SEVERE COURSE OF THE DISEASE.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF ENCEPHALITIS?

SYMPTOMS INCLUDE FEVER, HEADACHE, VOMITING, LIGHT-SENSITIVITY, STIFF NECK AND BACK (OCCASIONALLY), CONFUSION, DISORIENTATION, AND DROWSINESS.

WHAT IS THE TREATMENT FOR ENCEPHALITIS?

THE GOALS OF TREATMENT ARE TO PROVIDE SUPPORTIVE CARE AND RELIEVE SYMPTOMS. MEDICATIONS CAN BE GIVEN TO REDUCE FEVER AND HEADACHES, BUT MOST OF THE TIME NO SPECIFIC MEDICATIONS ARE AVAILABLE. REST, NUTRITION, AND FLUIDS HELP THE BODY TO FIGHT THE INFECTION.

ARE THERE COMPLICATIONS ASSOCIATED WITH ENCEPHALITIS?

SOME CASES ARE MILD AND SHORT, AND FOLLOWED BY FULL RECOVERY. OTHER CASES ARE SEVERE, AND CAN CAUSE BRAIN DAMAGE OR DEATH.

HOW CAN ENCEPHALITIS BE PREVENTED?

THE BEST WAY TO PREVENT ENCEPHALITIS IS TO AVOID GETTING INFECTED WITH THE VIRUSES OR OTHER GERMS THAT CAUSE IT. REGULAR HAND WASHING AND STAYING AS HEALTHY AS POSSIBLE CAN HELP PROTECT AGAINST INFECTION. IN AREAS WHERE VIRUSES ARE TRANSMITTED BY INSECT BITES, WEAR LONG SLEEVES, USE INSECT REPELLENT, AND AVOID OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES AT DAWN OR DUSK TO PREVENT INFECTION.