



DOCTOR DISCUSSION GUIDE

Managing Meningitis

Meningitis, a brain infection, can be intimidating, but understanding this condition is the first step towards taking control of your symptoms. Asking the right questions during your conversation will help you know what to expect and how to better navigate your condition. Familiarize yourself with these common terms before your appointment to help facilitate your discussion.

Vocabulary to Know

Your doctor might mention these common terms. Here's what they mean.

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| Meninges | Three layers of protective covering that surround the brain and spinal cord. They can become infected, resulting in meningitis. |
| Encephalitis | A rare infection of the brain that causes more severe symptoms than meningitis and is more likely to produce lasting effects, such as seizures or strokes. |
| Aseptic | Meningitis is often described as aseptic, meaning it is not caused by a bacterial infection. Aseptic meningitis is usually caused by a viral infection and generally has a good prognosis. |
| Septic | A bacterial infection of the meninges is often referred to as septic meningitis, and sometimes a fungal infection may be referred to as septic as well. These types of infections can rapidly worsen, but they can improve with treatment. |
| Cerebrospinal Fluid (CSF) | The fluid that surrounds the brain and spinal cord, flows in direct contact with the meninges, and often shows evidence of the infection if a person has meningitis. |
| Lumbar Puncture (LP) | Also referred to as a spinal tap, a lumbar puncture is an invasive procedure used to collect spinal fluid. A lumbar puncture may be necessary to search for infectious organisms or inflammatory cells in the spinal fluid. |
| Brain/Spine Imaging | Diagnostic tests such as brain or spine MRI and brain or spine CT may identify inflammation of the meninges, but often, these tests are normal with meningitis. |
| Nuchal Rigidity | One of the characteristic symptoms of meningitis, which is a stiff neck and neck pain associated with bending the neck. Often, it is severely painful to bend the neck, and sometimes it is impossible to bend the neck with meningitis. |
| Meningococcus (<i>Neisseria meningitidis</i>) | One of the common types of bacteria that causes meningitis, which must be treated with antibiotics. |
| Increased Intracranial Pressure | An infection of the meninges can cause swelling or excessive fluid and inflammation around the brain, potentially causing pressure inside the skull, referred to as increased intracranial pressure. This situation can cause fatigue, lethargy, or loss of consciousness, and usually requires treatment with fluid restriction, medication, or removal of the fluid with an invasive surgical procedure. |

