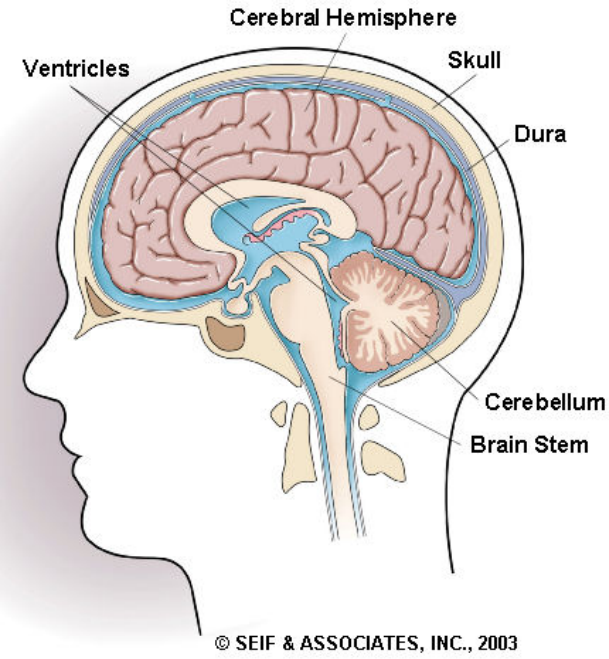
Encephalitis and Meningitis

Encephalitis is an inflammation of the brain. There are many types of encephalitis. Most are caused by viral infection.



SYMPTOMS OF ENCEPHALITIS INCLUDE:

- Sudden fever.
- Headache.
- Vomiting.
- Sensitivity to light.
- Stiff neck and back.
- Confusion.
- Drowsiness.
- Clumsiness.
- Irritability.

Meningitis is an infection of the membranes that surround the brain and spinal cord.

SYMPTOMS OF MENINGITIS:

- May appear suddenly.
- Often include high fever.
- Severe headache.
- Stiff neck.
- Feeling sick to your stomach (*nausea*).
- Vomiting.
- Changes in behavior that may require emergency treatment:
  - Confusion.
  - Sleepiness.
  - Difficulty waking up.
- In infants, symptoms of meningitis may include:
  - Irritability or tiredness.
  - Poor feeding.
  - Fever.

CAUSES

Meningitis may be caused by many different viruses and germs (*bacteria*). Viral meningitis cases are usually limited to 10 days or less. Some types of meningitis can be deadly if not treated promptly. Anyone showing symptoms of meningitis or encephalitis should see a doctor immediately.

TREATMENT

Antiviral medicine may be prescribed for herpes encephalitis. Antibiotics may be prescribed for bacterial infections. Anticonvulsants are used to prevent or treat convulsions (*seizures*). Corticosteroids are used to reduce brain swelling and inflammation. Sedatives may be needed for restlessness. Over-the-counter medicine may be used for fever and headache. Individuals with encephalitis or bacterial meningitis usually must get treatment in a hospital.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN

The likely outcome for encephalitis varies. Some cases are mild and patients have full recovery. Other cases are severe. In severe cases permanent damage or death is possible. The sudden phase of encephalitis may last for 1 to 2 weeks. Recovery from neurological symptoms may take many months. With early diagnosis and treatment,

most patients recover from meningitis. In some cases, the disease progresses so quickly that death may occur during the first 48 hours.

SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF:

- You lose consciousness.
- You have a seizure.
- There is muscle weakness.
- There is sudden memory loss.
- You notice impaired judgment.
- You withdraw from family and friends.

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