

Thursday, 19 April 2018

Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District provides advice to community on viral meningitis

Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District is urging the community to be alert to the symptoms of viral meningitis following several cases of the relatively common illness in the region.

Twelve people were diagnosed with viral meningitis, all caused by an enterovirus, and were hospitalised as a result.

Director Public Health, Curtis Gregory, said the first person became unwell in late March and the others in early April.

“There have been no indications of common links between the cases other than two patients who were from the same family,” Dr Gregory said.

“We have interviewed the patients and examined medical records to look for any common source of the infection. Further laboratory testing is also being carried out to identify which type of enterovirus has caused these illnesses.

“All of the patients have now been discharged from hospital after making a full recovery.”

Symptoms of viral meningitis can include fever, headache, sensitivity to light, lethargy or tiredness, stiff neck, nausea and vomiting.

It is important that all people with symptoms of meningitis are seen by a doctor immediately. Viral meningitis can sometimes cause serious illness on its own and symptoms are very similar to those of bacterial meningitis, which requires urgent medical treatment.

Viral meningitis is the most common type of meningitis, which is an inflammation of the lining of the brain and spinal cord. It is usually much less severe than bacterial meningitis, and most people get better without treatment within seven to 10 days.

Enteroviruses are spread from person to person through respiratory droplets, saliva, faeces or contact with contaminated items or water.

The best means of protecting yourself from infection and stopping transmission is through effective hand washing and good hygiene practice. This is particularly important prior to eating, after using the toilet, changing a nappy or helping care for a sick person.

There is no specific treatment for most cases, with rest and plenty of fluids recommended and medication to manage any pain and headaches.

Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District

Media contact: Media and Corporate Communications Unit

Phone: 4221 6862 or 0477 391 219 | Afterhours: 0422 003 764 | website: www.islhd.health.nsw.gov.au

healthdirect AUSTRALIA – providing expert health advice 24 hours a day to NSW residents – Tel. 1800 022 222