

Frequently asked questions about Meningitis associated with epidural spinal injections

(Updated October 10, 2012)

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About meningitis

What is meningitis?

Meningitis is an inflammation of the tissue surrounding a person's brain or spinal cord.

What can cause meningitis?

Meningitis is usually caused by bacteria or viruses. But meningitis can also have other causes, including different types of fungus. Fungal meningitis is rare. In this investigation, fungus has been identified in several patients.

Is fungal meningitis treatable?

Fungal meningitis is treated with long courses of high dose antifungal medications. This is usually given using an IV line and is done in the hospital.

Are people who have fungal meningitis contagious?

No, people who have fungal meningitis are not contagious. It is not transmitted from person to person.

What are the symptoms of the patients in this outbreak?

Symptoms include a fever, new or worsening headache, nausea, and new symptoms that look like a stroke, such as falling or having problems walking or talking. While some of the patients in this outbreak have very mild symptoms, in some cases the symptoms can get worse and be life threatening.

About this outbreak

What is the cause of this outbreak?

While investigation into the exact source of these infections is ongoing, all infected patients received epidural steroid injections (with preservative-free methylprednisolone acetate) from among 3 particular lots of medications. These medications were recalled on September 25, 2012 and are no longer in use. The patients who received an injection from these lots are being contacted by their physicians.

How many cases/deaths are in this outbreak?

Updates about the investigation, including [case counts](#), are available at <http://www.cdc.gov/hai/outbreaks/meningitis.html>.

How many cases/deaths do we have in Virginia?

Updates about the investigation, including Virginia case counts, are available at <http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/>.

Which facilities in Virginia are involved in the situation?

Two medical facilities in southwest Virginia are known to have received the lots of concern of methylprednisolone acetate from the manufacturer between July and September 2012.

Both facilities have contacted their patients who received this medication via any route of injection between July 2012 and September 2012. Insight Imaging in Roanoke contacted more than 600 patients and New River Valley Surgery Center in Christiansburg contacted less than 30 patients.

About the steroid injection (methylprednisolone acetate)

What is methylprednisolone acetate?

Methylprednisolone acetate is a medicine that is primarily used for treatment of pain and swelling. It should be used under physicians' guidance. Side effects of methylprednisolone acetate may include nausea, vomiting, heartburn, headache, dizziness, trouble sleeping, appetite changes, increased sweating, acne, or pain/redness/swelling at the injection site. Individuals who have persisting or worsening side effects should contact their physician promptly.

Which lots were recalled?

Methylprednisolone Acetate (PF) 80 mg/ml Injection, Lot #05212012@68, BUD 11/17/2012

Methylprednisolone Acetate (PF) 80 mg/ml Injection, Lot #06292012@26, BUD 12/26/2012

Methylprednisolone Acetate (PF) 80 mg/ml Injection, Lot #08102012@51, BUD 2/6/2013

Is there a way for me to know if I received medication from these 3 lots or the compounding pharmacy?

If you are concerned about which product was used in your procedure, you should contact the physician who performed your procedure.

The CDC says that anyone who received an injection after May 21, 2012 needs to be evaluated if they have symptoms. Why is Virginia saying on or after June 28, 2012?

In Virginia, the earliest date that either of the two facilities began to use the now-recalled methylprednisolone was June 28, 2012. The last date that the product was used in Virginia was September 26, 2012.

Does this "epidural" injection include epidurals that women are given during childbirth?

No, it is typically an injection for back pain but can be used in other areas of the body.

Information for patients who received injections

What do I do if I got a spinal injection at a facility in SW Virginia (between July-September) or from one of the medications in the recalled lot?

The facilities who received a recalled lot are actively contacting patients to let them know they received medication from one of these lots, and to check on patients' symptoms.

If you are concerned about which product was used in your procedure, you should contact the physician who performed your procedure.

If you received a spinal injection with one of the medications in the recalled lot, symptoms to be concerned about would include:

- New headache or worsening headache
- Fever
- New stiff neck
- Sensitivity to light
- Symptoms suggestive of a new stroke such as
 - slurred speech,
 - new or worse difficulty walking
 - increased dizziness or falls
- Worsening pain, redness or swelling at your injection site

If you have any of these symptoms, contact your physician immediately to receive further medical evaluation.

What do I do if I got a spinal injection but don't know if it's part of the recalled lot?

The facilities who received a recalled lot are actively contacting patients to let them know they received medication from one of these lots, and to check on patients' symptoms.

If you are concerned, you should contact your physician to find out if they received medication from one of these lots.

What if I got an injection at another facility?

No other Virginia facilities are involved. If you received an injection in another state, you need to call the facility to ask them if you received an injection of a recalled product. Rest assured that all facilities who gave these products to patients are attempting to locate the patients who received the implicated product.

What do I do if I didn't get an injection at one of those facilities, but I do not feel well?

If you do not feel well, you should contact a healthcare provider.

How long after I received the injection should I be concerned?

Patients have developed symptoms approximately one to four weeks following their injection.

10/10/12

Will all of the patients who were potentially exposed become sick?

The extent of the problem is not known at this point because the investigation is ongoing. The facilities who received a recalled lot are actively contacting patients to let them know they received medication from one of these lots, and to check on patients' symptoms.

If you are concerned, you should contact your physician to find out if they received medication from one of these lots.

Can I take medicine to prevent getting sick with fungal meningitis?

Treatment of people who do not have symptoms is not recommended at this time.

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What is Virginia doing?

What is VDH doing?

The Virginia Department of Health is working closely with other states and CDC. VDH has also contacted facilities that received the recalled product to ensure that they have stopped using the recalled products, is following up on individuals who received this product to determine their health status, is collecting product samples for possible laboratory testing, and is providing guidance, education and consultation regarding infection control and prevention of meningitis.