



- Please immediately bring to the attention of all doctors -

Date: 14 December 2007      Contact telephone number: 8226-7177 (24 hours/7 days)

## EPIDEMIC VOMITING / ASEPTIC MENINGITIS DUE TO ENTEROVIRUSES

The Communicable Disease Control Branch has received reports of outbreaks of vomiting and aseptic meningitis in the APY lands and the Port Augusta area. Enteroviruses have been detected in specimens from some of these cases.

Epidemics of self-limiting enteroviral vomiting and meningitis have been occurring for some months in Western Australia, the Northern Territory, and North Queensland. These outbreaks were caused by a new strain of virus, and the subsequent lack of immunity was thought to explain the high number of cases. It appears that the infection has now spread to South Australia, and it is likely to become more widespread.

Symptoms include fever, headache, vomiting, meningism, sometimes a maculopapular blanching rash, and rarely, transient encephalitis. Infants present with fever, vomiting, irritability and drowsiness. Illness has tended to last 1 – 2 days, and has affected all age ranges. Consistent with the usual self-limiting nature of infections with these viruses, there have been no deaths reported, though seriously ill cases should be referred to an infectious diseases physician. Antiviral treatment is not indicated, nor readily available. There is no vaccine.

Transmission is via the respiratory and faecal-oral routes, and patients are most infectious during the first week. The virus may persist in stools for several weeks. Good hygiene principles, particularly hand-washing, may help to limit transmission.

Cases are confirmed by enteroviral PCR or culture as there is no serology test available. Appropriate specimens for diagnosis include faeces, throat swab in viral transport medium, and CSF if lumbar puncture is indicated. **Please note that presentation may be similar to meningococcal infection**, and it is therefore important that all cases be assessed individually, and where meningococcal infection is considered possible, also take blood cultures and EDTA blood for PCR, and commence appropriate antibiotics.

Please contact CDCB on 08 8226 7177 (24 hours/ 7 days) if you have any queries. Enterovirus infection is not notifiable in South Australia.

**Dr Ann Koehler - Director, Communicable Disease Control Branch**

*Information contained within this advice should be treated as confidential and is for the intended recipient only.*

PUBLIC HEALTH ALERT