

# Encephalitis

## Reporting Obligations

Individuals who have or may have encephalitis shall be **immediately reported by phone** to the local Health Unit.

### REPORTING FORM

## Epidemiology

### Aetiologic Agent:

Encephalitis is an acute inflammatory disease involving parts of the brain, spinal cord and meninges caused by specific viruses, as well as bacteria, fungi, and protozoa. Post-infectious encephalitis can occur after vaccination or respiratory infections. The most common viruses implicated are measles, rubella, smallpox and chicken pox.

### Clinical Presentation:

Most viral encephalitis infections are asymptomatic; mild cases often have febrile headache; severe infections are usually differentiated by acute onset, with headache, high fever, meningeal signs, stupor, disorientation, coma, tremors, convulsions and spastic paralysis.

In post-infectious encephalitis, cases usually present with confusion, seizures, headaches, stiffness of the neck and fever.

### Modes of transmission:

Depends on causative agent.

### Incubation Period:

Depends on causative agent. For primary viral encephalitis the incubation period is usually 5-15 days.

### Period of Communicability:

Varies depending on the causative agent.

## Risk Factors/Susceptibility

Susceptibility to clinical disease is usually highest in infancy and in old age.

- Immunization in the last 3 weeks
- Infectious illness in last 10 days
- Exposure to certain vectors (e.g. mosquitos)

## Diagnosis & Laboratory Testing

Cases are confirmed if a patient has clinically compatible signs and symptoms of encephalitis along with isolation of organism from an appropriate specimen (e.g. cerebrospinal fluid or stool), detection of a specific antigen, or serologic confirmation of infection with an organism known to cause encephalitis.

### TESTING INFORMATION & REQUISITION

## Treatment & Case Management

Treatment is mainly supportive and is under the care of the attending Health Care Provider.

Public Health will follow up as needed.

## Patient Information

### PATIENT FACT SHEET

## References

1. [Ministry of Health and Long Term Care, Infectious Diseases Protocol, 2009.](#)

## Additional Resources

1. [PHAC. "Eastern Equine Encephalitis, Pathogen Safety Data Sheet-Infectious Substances."](#)
2. [CDC. "Eastern Equine Encephalitis, Symptoms and Treatment."](#)
3. [PHO. "Eastern Equine Encephalitis Virus, History and Enhanced Surveillance in Ontario."](#)
4. [Simcoe Muskoka HealthStats: Encephalitis/meningitis](#)