






Encephalitis

Also called: inflammation of the brain

Inflammation of the brain, often due to infection.

Rare

Fewer than 200,000 US cases per year

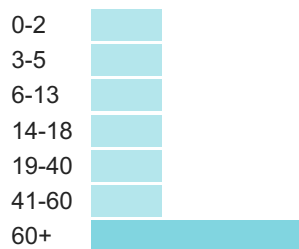
-  Treatable by a medical professional
-  Spreads by animals or insects
-  Requires a medical diagnosis
-  Lab tests or imaging often required
-  Short-term: resolves within days to weeks

The infection may be bacterial or viral. In some cases encephalitis, may be the result of an immune system disorder.

Mild cases may cause no symptoms or mild flu-like symptoms. Severe cases can be life-threatening. Immediate medical attention is needed for symptoms such as confusion, hallucinations, seizures, weakness, and loss of sensation.

In addition to addressing the underlying cause, treatments include symptomatic relief and supportive care.

Ages affected



How it spreads

By animal or insect bites or stings.

Symptoms

Requires a medical diagnosis

Mild cases may cause no symptoms or mild flu-like symptoms. Severe cases can be life-threatening. Immediate medical attention is needed for symptoms such as confusion, hallucinations, seizures, weakness, and loss of sensation.

Can have no symptoms, but people may experience:**Pain areas:** in the muscles**Whole body:** fatigue, fever, loss of appetite, or malaise**Muscular:** muscle weakness, problems with coordination, rhythmic muscle contractions, or unsteady gait**Cognitive:** altered level of consciousness, disorientation, or mental confusion**Gastrointestinal:** nausea or vomiting**Psychological:** delirium or hallucination**Also common:** irritability, light sensitivity, headache, stiff neck, reduced sensation of touch, or seizures**Treatments****Treatment varies**

In addition to addressing the underlying cause, treatments include symptomatic relief and supportive care.

Medications**Antiviral drug:** Reduces viruses' ability to replicate.

- Acyclovir (Zovirax and Sitavig)

Anticonvulsant: Prevents or controls seizures, relieves pain, and treats symptoms of certain psychiatric disorders.

- Phenytoin (Dilantin-125, Phenytek, Dilantin Infatabs, Dilantin Extended, and Dilantin Kapseal)

Supportive care**Fluid replacement:** Supplies or replenishes water and nutrients in the body.**Can be self-healing:** Condition usually improves over time without treatment.**Specialists****Infectious disease doctor:** Treats infections, including those that are tropical in nature.**Neurologist:** Treats nervous system disorders.**Pediatrician:** Provides medical care for infants, children, and teenagers.**Primary care provider (PCP):** Prevents, diagnoses, and treats diseases.**Emergency medicine doctor:** Treats patients in the emergency department.**Critical:** consult a doctor for medical advice

Note: The information you see describes what usually happens with a medical condition, but doesn't apply to everyone. This information isn't medical advice, so make sure to contact a healthcare provider if you have a medical problem. If you think you may have a medical emergency, call your doctor or a emergency number immediately.

Sources: Mayo Clinic and others. [Learn more](#)