

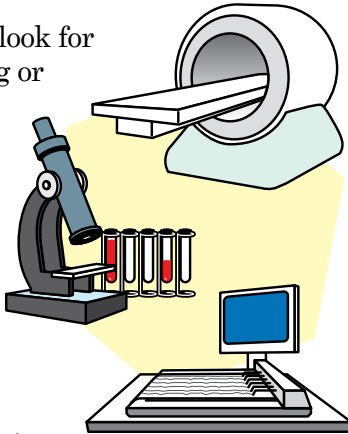
## Diagnosing ADEM:

Diagnosing ADEM can be a tricky thing for doctors to do. Everybody's symptoms can be different and some symptoms are also warning signs of other diseases of the brain and spinal cord. Here are some of the tests that doctors use to diagnose ADEM:

**MRI** stands for *Magnetic Resonance Imaging*. It is a machine that you lie in, and a giant magnet spins around you that is able to take pictures of your brain and spine.

**Blood Tests** are used to look for signs of infection, swelling or inflammation and other diseases that may be causing your symptoms.

**LP** stands for *Lumbar Puncture*. The lumbar part of your spine is at the bottom of your spine, near your waist. Removing some of the cerebrospinal fluid that surrounds your spinal cord from this part of your spine is generally safe to do. It allows doctors to look for signs of inflammation, infection or injury in the fluid surrounding your brain and spinal cord.



## Information and resources

Learn more about ADEM by visiting these websites:

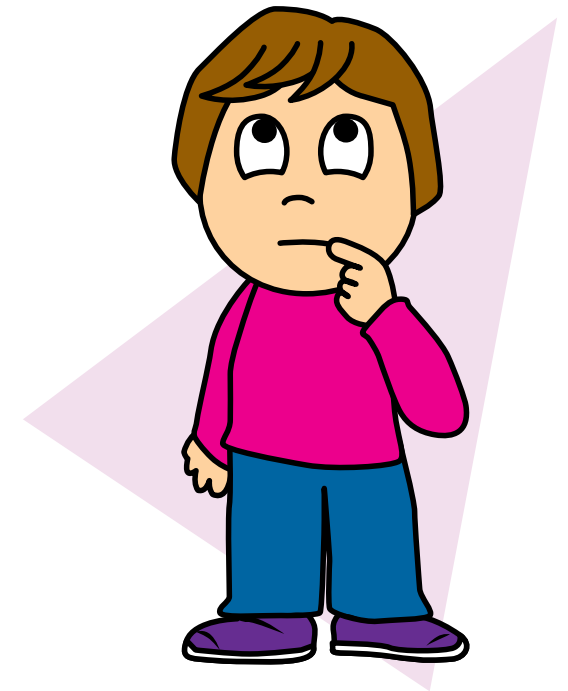
### Neuroscience for kids

<http://faculty.washington.edu/chudler/neurok.html>

### Canadian Transverse Myelitis Association

<http://mytm.ca/>

# What is ADEM?



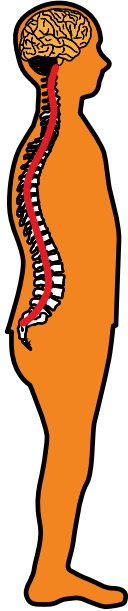
## What you need to know:

Anyone can get Acute Disseminated Encephalomyelitis (ADEM), but it is most common among children and teens. It is a rare illness.

If you have ADEM, there is inflammation in some areas of your brain and your spinal cord.

Your spinal cord is connected to the base of your brain and runs down the middle of your back ending near your waist. It is protected by back bones called vertebrae and a fluid called cerebrospinal fluid. It is the main “highway” that brings information to and from your brain. Nerve cells in your spinal cord connect to all parts of your body.

When brain or spinal nerves are inflamed, you can lose movement, feeling and control over the parts of your body connected to those nerves. You may also have big changes in your mood or behaviour and you may become unconscious.



## The cause of ADEM:

Most often ADEM occurs after a viral or bacterial infection. Very rarely ADEM can occur after a vaccination (in less than 5% of cases). Sometimes your own body can mistake nerve cells for germs and if that happens, it attacks them. This is called an autoimmune reaction. At the moment it is thought that ADEM is usually caused by an autoimmune reaction. Doctors will try to find out what caused your ADEM but sometimes an answer isn't found, or we don't know enough yet to understand why it happens.

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## Treatment

Work is being done by doctors and scientists to help kids recover from ADEM and to make the symptoms less severe. Most children who have ADEM will recover over 4 to 6 weeks and have no remaining symptoms after 6 months. Doctors may use medications to reduce inflammation and to treat infection. If you have had a seizure during your illness, you may be given medications to control seizures.

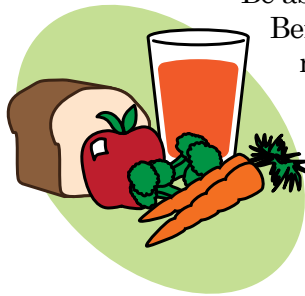
## Overall Health

Get enough sleep to feel good and to help maintain your body's natural resistance to infection.



## Eat Well & Be Active

Eating healthy foods will help strengthen your body.



Be as active as possible every day. Being active can strengthen muscles that have weakened during your illness. Exercise is also good for your brain and can help you stay focused on your recovery.

Colds, Flu and other viruses can often make your ADEM symptoms worse for a while. Treating and preventing these illnesses will often help you to manage your ADEM symptoms and help you to recover more quickly.

## Support from Family and Friends

It is normal to feel sad, alone, scared, frustrated and angry.

ADEM is a sudden and frightening illness to go through for you and those who love you.

Talking with friends, family and your doctor about these feelings is important.

It will help them to understand your ADEM and it allows them to help you in appropriate ways.

## Going to the Doctor

It is important to visit your doctors often as you recover. You may need to have MRI scans for a few years to make sure the inflammation is gone.



Talk to your doctors about what works for you and what doesn't. Most doctors are learning about ADEM just like you are because it is a rare illness.