

20th March 2026

Dear Parent or Carer,

You may have seen news stories about the meningitis cases in Canterbury, Kent recently. I know this can be worrying but I would like to reassure you that this situation is very rare, and there have not been cases locally.

What is meningitis?

Meningitis is an infection of the membranes around the brain and spinal cord and it can be caused by a virus or bacteria. The current cases in Canterbury are caused by a bacteria called Meningococcal B (Men B) but there are other types of meningococcal bacteria. This bacteria can also cause blood poisoning or sepsis. Meningitis and sepsis can both be very serious.

In Derbyshire we typically see very few cases of Men B each year. We do not normally see large groups of cases, and if infection is spread between people, it is commonly between those who live in the same household.

Meningitis is rare but anyone can get meningitis or sepsis. It is more common in babies and young children, teenagers and young adults, older people and people with a weak immune system.

Close contact such as living together, kissing, sharing drinks or vapes is needed to spread this infection. It is not as easy to catch as measles or flu.

What can I do to protect my child against meningitis and sepsis?

There are 3 things you can do to protect your child against meningitis and sepsis:

- 1. make sure your child is up to date with vaccinations,**
- 2. keep good hygiene**
- 3. know what to look for**

1. There are several vaccines that protect against diseases that can go on to cause meningitis and sepsis. Check your child's GP record or their 'red book' to ensure they are up to date with vaccinations. Your GP Practice will be able to guide you on catching up with any missed vaccinations.

The current cases in Canterbury are caused by Men B. The vaccination against Men B is offered to babies, because they are most vulnerable to becoming seriously unwell. If you have young children under the age of 2, please ensure they have received this vaccination. The Men B vaccine is not currently recommended above this age routinely. A small number of people in Canterbury are being offered the vaccination, but this is due to their links to cases in the current outbreak.

Other types of Meningococcal bacteria called A, C, W, and Y can also be vaccinated against. Children are offered this at school when they are in year 9. If your child has missed their MenACWY vaccine they can catch-up:

- Any Y9, Y10 or Y11 child, or home-educated child of this age, who missed the MenACWY vaccine may be able to have a catch up in school or can attend a clinic with the school immunisation team. You can book an appointment by calling IntraHealth on 0333 3583 397, option 5, option 2.
 - Young people who have left secondary school can get the MenACWY vaccine up to the age of 25 by contacting their GP.
2. Good hygiene can protect against many different infections. This includes:
- Washing your hands regularly with soap and water, including after using the toilet and before eating/drinking.
 - Do not share items that have touched your mouth with others, including plates, forks, spoons, glasses, cigarettes, vapes etc.
3. When it starts, meningitis or sepsis can look like a cold or the flu, but someone with meningitis will usually become very unwell in a few hours. Keep checking on someone who is poorly. They may:
- have a high temperature or fever
 - be sick
 - be very sleepy, hard to wake up or confused
 - have aches and pains
 - have blotchy skin or spots
 - have a headache or want to be in the dark

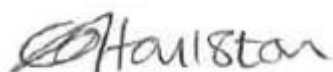
If you are not sure whether someone may have meningitis or sepsis call NHS111 for advice.

If you are worried that someone may have meningitis or sepsis trust your instincts and call 999 or go to your nearest A&E.

A rash that does not fade when you press the side of a clear glass to it can be a sign of sepsis. If you see this, call 999.

More information on the signs and symptoms of meningitis and the vaccinations that protect against it can be found on the poster at the end of this letter.

Yours Sincerely



Ellie Houlston
Director of Public Health
Derbyshire County Council

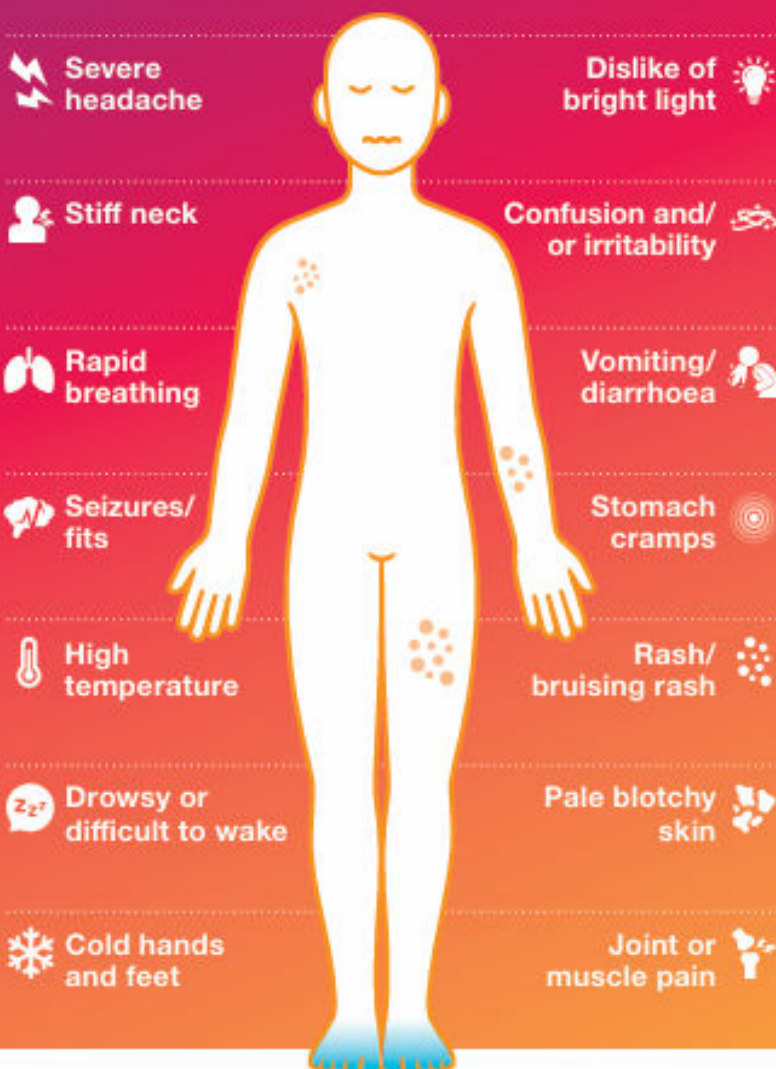


UK Health
Security
Agency

NHS



Meningitis and septicaemia



Meningitis can kill in hours

These are just some of the warning signs. If you are worried for yourself or someone else get medical help immediately. Call NHS 111.

Find out more:

Find out about the
MenACWY vaccine
www.nhs.uk/conditions/vaccinations/men-acwy-vaccine/



Signs and symptoms
of meningitis
and septicaemia

www.nhs.uk/conditions/meningitis/symptoms/



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