

## Signs and symptoms

### Meningitis:

- fever
- very bad headache
- vomiting
- stiff neck
- dislike of bright lights
- rash
- confusion, delirium
- severe sleepiness, losing consciousness
- seizures

### Septicaemia:

- fever and shivering
- vomiting
- severe pains and aches in limbs and joints
- very cold hands and feet
- pale or mottled skin
- rapid breathing
- diarrhoea and stomach cramps
- red or purple 'bruised' or blotchy rash with spots that do not fade under pressure – do the glass test shown overleaf. On dark skin, check inside the eyelids or roof of the mouth where the spots may be more visible
- difficulty walking or standing
- severe sleepiness, losing consciousness

**Not everyone will develop all these symptoms – they can appear in any order and be mixed between the two illnesses. It is important to seek early medical advice if you or a friend have symptoms of concern or a condition that is getting rapidly worse.**

**Make sure you, your family and your friends look out for each other and that someone knows if you are unwell so they can keep an eye on you. This could be life-saving!**

### For more information contact:

#### Meningitis Research Foundation

Free helpline 0808 80 03 344

[www.meningitis.org](http://www.meningitis.org)

#### Meningitis Now

24 hour helpline

0808 80 10 388

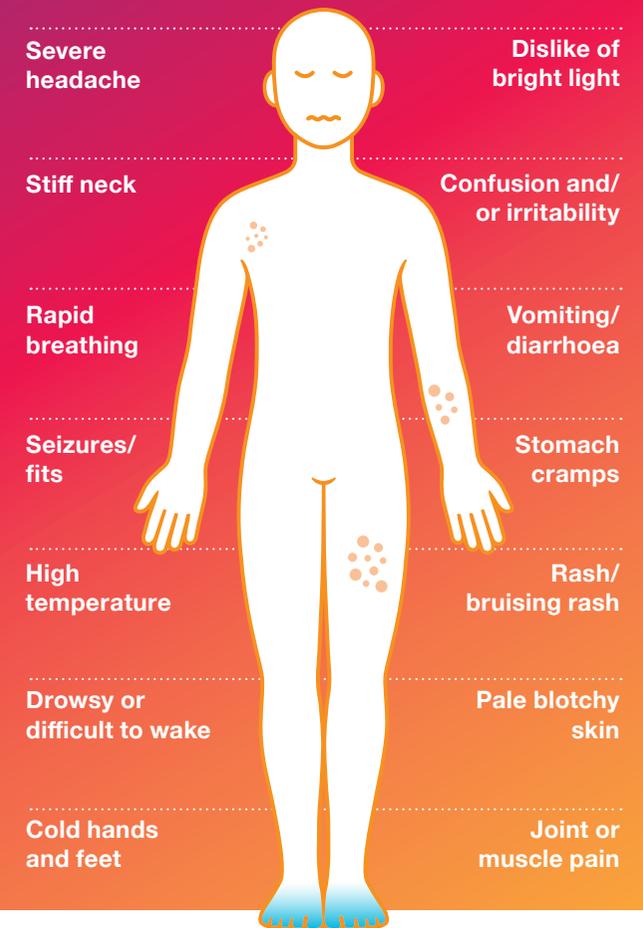
[www.meningitisnow.org](http://www.meningitisnow.org)

#### Useful links:

- [www.nhs.uk/conditions/meningitis](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/meningitis)
- [www.nhs.uk/vaccinations](http://www.nhs.uk/vaccinations)
- [www.nhs.uk/conditions/vaccinations/men-acwy-vaccine](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/vaccinations/men-acwy-vaccine)

# Meningitis and septicaemia

## Don't ignore the signs



## Be aware, be prepared

Meningococcal meningitis (inflammation of the lining of the brain and spinal column) and septicaemia (blood poisoning) are rare but severe diseases that can kill or leave people with life changing disabilities and health problems. Both meningitis and septicaemia can lead to sepsis.

**Teenagers, and university students in particular, are at increased risk.** But you can protect yourself against four kinds of meningococcal disease by getting your free MenACWY vaccine.

## Protect yourself with MenACWY vaccine

Most UK teenagers and young adults born from September 1996 will have been offered MenACWY vaccine whilst at school but they remain eligible up to their 25<sup>th</sup> birthday. Overseas students entering a UK university for the first time who have not had MenACWY vaccine are also eligible up to their 25<sup>th</sup> birthday. If you fit either of these groups and have not yet had the vaccine book an appointment with your GP practice now. If you are unsure discuss this with your GP practice.

MenACWY vaccine is very effective at preventing meningococcal meningitis and septicaemia caused by MenA, MenC, MenW and MenY.

But remember that this **vaccine can't prevent all forms of meningitis and septicaemia.** So it is very important that you are aware of the signs and symptoms.



Check regularly on anyone who isn't well, you might save a life



Know the signs and symptoms of meningitis and septicemia



### The glass test

Press the side of a glass firmly against the rash so you can see if it fades under pressure. If it doesn't fade, get medical help immediately. If you are feeling very ill, get help anyway, even if the rash fades or doesn't appear at all.

## What are the signs and symptoms?

Many of the early signs – vomiting, fever, aches, general tiredness and headaches – are also signs of less serious illnesses like colds and flu. But someone with meningitis or septicaemia will usually become seriously ill in a matter of hours.

This is why it is very important to keep checking someone who is ill so you know if they are getting rapidly worse and to keep looking for signs and symptoms. Seek medical help urgently if you become concerned about their or your own health.

It's important too to look for cold hands and feet, severe limb pain and pale and blotchy skin, as these tend to develop early in the illness. Symptoms such as a rash that doesn't fade (do the glass test shown opposite), being confused or delirious, or too sleepy to wake are very serious.

## How is meningitis spread?

The bacteria that cause these diseases are usually spread by close or lengthy contact. Most cases happen individually but outbreaks sometimes occur in schools or where people share living space, such as university halls.

**Have your MenACWY vaccine at your GP practice. In some areas it may be available at your pharmacy.**