

Dear colleagues and families,

You will have heard about the recent Meningitis B cases in Canterbury, and although this is not local to us, it's a useful reminder of how important it is to be informed and stay protected against serious meningococcal infections.

Meningococcal disease (meningitis and septicaemia) is an uncommon disease caused by meningococcal bacteria, which can cause serious illness – meningitis (inflammation of the lining of the brain) and septicaemia (blood poisoning), which can rapidly lead to sepsis.

There are numerous strains of the meningococcal infection. The MenACWY vaccination gives good protection against MenA, MenC, MenW, and MenY and is routinely offered to teenagers in school Years 9 and 10. However, this vaccine does not protect against all forms of meningitis.

If you're under 25 and you've not had the MenACWY vaccine before, you should ideally have it at least 2 weeks before starting college or university. Ask a GP about getting vaccinated. If you've already started college or university, get the vaccine as soon as possible. Ask at the health centre on campus or [register with a GP](#) to get it.

Other strains such as MenB can circulate in young adults, which is why it's important to know how to spot the symptoms of [meningitis](#) and [septicaemia](#). The onset of illness is often sudden and early diagnosis and treatment with antibiotics are vital.

Early symptoms, which may not always be present, include:

- A rash that doesn't fade when pressed with a glass
- Sudden onset of high fever
- Severe and worsening headache
- Stiff neck
- Vomiting and diarrhoea
- Joint and muscle pain
- Dislike of bright lights
- Very cold hands and feet
- Seizures
- Confusion/delirium
- Extreme sleepiness/difficulty waking

If you or someone you know is ill and you are worried about meningitis or septicaemia, contact NHS 111 or 999 in an emergency.

Young people going on to university or college for the first time are particularly at risk of meningitis because they mix with so many other students, some of whom are unknowingly carrying the bacteria at the back of their nose and throat.

If you have any queries, please visit the helpful links below.

Further information on meningococcal disease is available from:

- The NHS: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/meningitis/>
- The Meningitis Research Foundation: [www.meningitis.org](http://www.meningitis.org) 0808 800 3344 (24 hours)
- Meningitis Now: [www.meningitisnow.org](http://www.meningitisnow.org) 0808 80 10 388 (9am – 8pm)



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