



Our Ref: 4116367

Date: 10/03/2022

**IMPORTANT: MENINGOCOCCAL DISEASE INFORMATION
FOLLOWING A CASE IN SCHOOL (please read all sides)**

Dear Parent or Guardian

A pupil at your child's school has been admitted to hospital with suspected meningococcal disease which can cause both meningitis and septicaemia. Meningitis is when bacteria reach the meninges (the lining around the brain and spinal cord) and cause dangerous swelling. Septicaemia is when bacteria enter the bloodstream and cause blood poisoning. Both forms of meningococcal disease can trigger sepsis – an overwhelming and life-threatening immune response to infection which can lead to organ failure.

This letter gives you some information about the disease. There is no reason for you to make any change in the school routine and no reason for children to be kept at home.

How the disease spreads

The meningococcal bacteria very rarely spreads from child to child within class or school. The bacteria that cause the illness live naturally in the back of the throat and can spread between people in droplets from the mouth and nose. Many people carry the bacteria in their throats without becoming unwell.

Preventing the spread of meningococcal disease

The best way to stop the disease spreading is by giving antibiotics to the very close family contacts of the patient with the illness. That usually means that only people who live in the same house as the sick child need treatment. School contacts are only very rarely at risk.

The people who need treatment have already been identified and treated.

Symptoms of meningococcal disease

The risk of another case in the school is very small, but it is sensible to be aware of the main signs and symptoms of meningococcal meningitis and septicaemia, outlined below.

Some common signs and symptoms of meningococcal disease

High temperature	Rapid breathing
Vomiting/ diarrhoea and stomach cramps	Joint or muscle pain
	Cold hands and feet
Severe headache	Pale blotchy skin
Stiff neck	Confusion and/or irritability
Dislike of bright light	Drowsiness or difficult to wake
Rash/ bruising rash	Seizures/ fits

One or more of these symptoms may develop and they can appear in any order.

Meningococcal disease can be hard to identify at first because it can be like a bad case of flu. However, anyone affected with meningococcal disease will usually become seriously ill within a few hours. You should keep checking your child if they are unwell and contact your GP (family doctor) or NHS 111 for advice if you have any concerns. If you become worried about your child's condition, particularly if they are getting worse, seek medical help **urgently** at the closest A&E Department or by dialling 999. BE WATCHFUL and use your instincts. Early treatment can be life-saving.

Protecting against meningococcal disease

It is important to be aware that meningococcal disease is caused by different groups of meningococcal bacteria. In the UK meningococcal disease is almost always caused by one of four meningococcal groups commonly known as MenB, MenC, MenW or MenY. These groups of meningococcal disease can be prevented with vaccines. MenA disease is rare in the UK but this can also be prevented by vaccination.

The following meningococcal vaccines are offered as part of the routine UK schedule:

MenB vaccine (which protects against most cases of MenB disease), routinely offered as three doses given as part of the infant immunisation programme at 8 weeks, 16 weeks and 12 months of age. Children born in the UK on or after 01/05/2015 have been offered this vaccine.

Hib-MenC vaccine (which protects against MenC disease), routinely offered at 12 months as part of the routine childhood immunisation programme.

MenACWY vaccine (which protects against MenA, MenC, MenW and MenY disease) routinely offered at 13 to 15 years of age.

Anyone born on or after 01/09/1996 who was eligible but missed their teenage MenACWY vaccine can still have the vaccine up to their 25th birthday. Anyone who is older and starting university for the first time can still have the vaccine up to their 25th birthday. For a young person still at school speak to their school provider to arrange vaccination otherwise you will need to make an appointment with their GP practice.

Please ensure your child is up to date with their routine vaccinations with their GP practice. Even if they had MenC vaccine when they were younger, it is important that teenagers get the MenACWY vaccine as it boosts protection against MenC disease and protects against more groups of meningococcal disease.

Be watchful for signs and symptoms even if your child is up to date with their vaccinations as available vaccines do not protect against all causes of the disease.

All meningococcal vaccines offered to eligible children as part of routine programmes are freely available on the NHS. Vaccines may be available privately for those who are not eligible under these programmes. Meningococcal disease can affect anyone of any age but the national immunisation programmes target those most at risk.

Further information on meningococcal disease is available from:

- The Meningitis Research Foundation, www.meningitis.org 0808 800 3344
- Meningitis Now, www.meningitisnow.org 0808 80 10 388 helpline email address: helpline@meningitisnow.org

If you need further support or advice, please contact [insert contact details](#) or call us [insert contact telephone number](#)