

Meningitis and septicaemia: awareness for educational settings

The Public Health Agency (PHA) is aware of the meningococcal disease outbreak recently reported in South East England. The UKHSA is leading the response to the outbreak and there is **no increased risk** to the population in Northern Ireland. However, this incident highlights that it is important for everyone to be aware of the signs and symptoms of meningitis and the steps to take if they are concerned.

Meningococcal infection doesn't spread very easily. The bacteria can only be passed to others after a long period of close contact, for example living with someone in shared accommodation or through prolonged kissing. While meningococcal disease can affect all ages, recent outbreaks have shown that older children, teenagers and young adults, particularly those in shared settings such as schools, colleges and universities, are more likely to be affected.

Meningococcal disease is uncommon but can become serious very quickly, particularly in teenagers and young adults. Early recognition of symptoms and prompt medical assessment are essential.

A range of resources are available to support awareness:

- PHA press release: www.pha.site/MeningitisKent
- Information on meningitis symptoms and vaccinations can be found on NI Direct: www.pha.site/meningitis-nidirect
- The Meningitis Research Foundation has produced clear and accessible guidance for the public on signs and symptoms, and when to seek urgent medical advice: www.meningitis.org/about-meningitis/symptoms/young-adults/
- Leaflets on MenACWY vaccine
 - Teenage immunisations for ages 14 to 18: www.pha.site/teenage-immunisations
 - Are you aged up to 25 years and starting university for the first time?: www.pha.site/MenACWYstudentsguide

We encourage you to share or signpost these resources to staff and, where appropriate, students and parents.

If someone is unwell and meningitis or septicaemia is a concern:

- Seek urgent medical advice (via GP, Out of Hours service, or Emergency Department as appropriate)
- Do not wait for all symptoms to appear or for a rash to develop
- In an emergency, call 999

Actions for educational settings

Educational settings do not need to implement any additional control measures in response to this communication. Routine activities should continue as normal, with a focus on awareness and early identification of illness.

Students can and should continue to attend the school as normal.

Social media

The below graphics can be shared directly or from PHA social media accounts.

Meningitis - know the symptoms

Symptoms of meningitis develop suddenly and can include:



Fever (over 37.5C)



Vomiting



Headache /Stiffness



Confusion



Rash



Dislike of
bright lights



Fatigue



Seizures (fits)

If you become worried about yourself, your child, or a friend, particularly if symptoms are getting worse, seek medical help urgently.

MenACWY vaccine



Pupils in year 11 and 12, are offered the MenACWY vaccine in school. The vaccine helps protect young people against four different causes of meningitis and septicaemia: meningococcal groups A, C, W and Y disease. If you're aged 25 or under, at university and haven't yet had the MenACWY vaccination, you should ask your GP for the vaccine.

There are other types of meningitis that there are no vaccines against, so it is important to still watch out for the signs and symptoms.

www.pha.site/meningitis-nidirect