

Meningitis A, B, C, W & Y

Meningitis is an infection of the protective membranes that surround the brain and spinal cord (meninges). Meningitis can be very serious if not treated quickly and can result in permanent damage to the brain or nerves.

Catching meningitis

Meningitis is caused by a bacteria or virus. Bacterial meningitis is rarer but more serious than viral meningitis.

Infections that cause meningitis can be spread through sneezing and coughing.

Meningitis is usually caught from people who carry these viruses or bacteria in their nose or throat but are not ill themselves.

Symptoms of meningitis



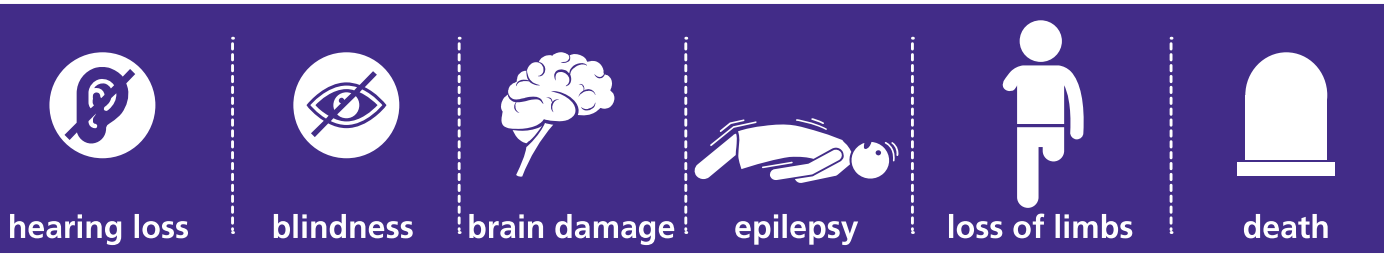
Other symptoms of meningitis are: cold hands and feet; confusion; breathing quickly; muscle and joint pain; pale, mottled, or blotchy skin; spots or rashes; sensitivity to bright lights and being very sleepy or difficult to wake.

Treatment of meningitis

Bacterial meningitis usually needs to be treated with antibiotics in hospital.

Viral meningitis is usually mild and tends to get better on its own within 7 to 10 days and can be treated at home with rest, fluids and pain relief.

Possible long-term complications of meningitis

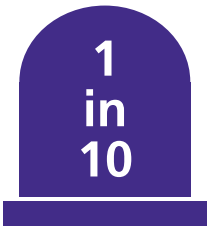


Meningitis in numbers

It's estimated up to 1 person in every 2 or 3 who survives bacterial meningitis is left with 1 or more permanent problems.



Overall, it's estimated up to 1 in every 10 cases of bacterial meningitis is fatal.



Viral meningitis is much more common than bacterial meningitis by 2:1.



Preventing meningitis

The best way to prevent meningitis is by vaccination following the UK Routine Immunisation Schedule.

If any doses from the schedule are missed, contact your GP Practice who can advise you and book the necessary vaccine(s).

NHS Meningitis webpage

Oxford Vaccine Knowledge Meningitis webpage

DISCLAIMER: This document is not to be used as a tool for diagnosing a child or adult with meningitis. If you or your child have any of the above symptoms, contact your GP or call 111 right away.

Developed by NHS North Central London Integrated Care Board.