

Recognising meningitis and septicaemia

The MenC vaccine and the Hib vaccine protect against two types of meningitis and septicaemia (blood poisoning). There are other types for which there are no vaccines so it is important to still watch out for the signs and symptoms.

Meningitis can cause swelling of the lining of the brain. The same germs may also cause blood poisoning (septicaemia). A baby or child with meningitis or septicaemia can become very ill within hours. If untreated both diseases may be fatal. Early symptoms of meningitis are mild and similar to those you get with colds and flu, such as a raised temperature (37.5°C and above), fretfulness, vomiting and refusal to eat. However, some of the important signs to look out for include:

In babies

- high pitched cry;
- difficult to wake;
- very high temperature (39°C and above);
- pale or blotchy skin;
- very cold hands and feet;
- red or purple spots/marks that do not fade under pressure (see photo). These can appear anywhere on the body.



If a glass tumbler is pressed firmly against a septicaemic rash the rash will not fade. You will be able to see the rash through the glass. If this happens get a doctor's help immediately.

In older children

- a stiff neck - can the child touch their forehead to their knee?
- drowsiness or confusion;
- very bad headache;
- dislike of bright lights;
- very cold hands and feet;
- red or purple spots/marks that do not fade under pressure (see photo). These can appear anywhere on the body.

You shouldn't wait for all of these signs to appear. If your child becomes ill with any one of these important signs, contact your doctor immediately or take your child to the accident and emergency department of your nearest hospital.

Where can I get more information?

The Meningitis Research Foundation and Meningitis Trust both provide information on meningitis.

- Phone the Meningitis Research Foundation's free 24-hour helpline on 080 8800 3344 or telephone 028 9032 1283. You can also visit the website at www.meningitis.org
- Phone the Meningitis Trust's 24-hour helpline on 0845 6000 800 or visit the website at www.meningitis-trust.org

