

Knowing about meningitis and septicaemia

Meningitis is a swelling of the lining of the brain. The same germs that cause meningitis can cause septicaemia (blood poisoning). Meningitis and septicaemia are both very serious - they can cause permanent disability and death - so you must get treatment straight away. If you haven't been immunised against meningitis C, you should have this done now. The MenC vaccine only protects against one type of meningitis and septicaemia, so you still need to know the signs and symptoms.

What do I look for?

Early symptoms of meningitis and septicaemia are mild and similar to those you get with flu, such as feeling hot, being sick, and pain in the back or joints. However, the most important signs to look out for are:

- a stiff neck (check that you can touch your forehead to your knee)
- a very bad headache
- lights hurting your eyes
- becoming disoriented (dazed and confused)
- red or purple spots that don't fade when you press them (do the glass test explained opposite)
- starting to lose consciousness
- very cold hands and feet.

What should I do?

If you get one or more of the symptoms, get help urgently. If you get treatment for meningitis and septicaemia quickly, you stand the best chance of making a full recovery.



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.

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