

**The Meningitis Trust is here to help you, when you need us and for as long as you need us.**

Meningitis can strike in an instant, but its impact can last a lifetime. We know that meningitis and septicaemia can turn your world upside down.

**We help and support around 20,000 people every year, providing a range of FREE services. We can:**

- Listen; and answer your questions about meningitis and its life-changing impact.
- Talk to you about your individual experience and how we can tailor our help to you.
- Visit you in your own home and provide support locally to you.
- Put you in touch with others who have been through it too.
- Provide financial assistance to help make life that little bit easier.
- Support you and those closest to you; children, teenagers and adults.
- Make you a priority; we have no waiting lists for our services.

**If you are interested in finding out how we can help, give us a call and we can talk everything through. Requesting a home visit can be a great starting point.**

 **24-hour nurse-led helpline**  
**0808 80 10 388**

### You can make a difference

We are proud of the work we do, but we can't do it alone. We rely on voluntary donations and need help from people like you. Every penny, pound, hour and day given makes a big difference. Here's how:

#### Be a volunteer

If you have some spare time or energy, there are many ways you can help us reach more people and raise awareness of meningitis.

[www.meningitis-trust.org/volunteer](http://www.meningitis-trust.org/volunteer)

#### Share your experience

Sharing your experience of meningitis can empower others to ask for the information and support they need to help with their own recovery.

[www.meningitis-trust.org/share](http://www.meningitis-trust.org/share)

#### Raise some money

Take part in an extreme challenge or have a coffee with your friends; there are many ways to raise money and have fun doing it.

[www.meningitis-trust.org/fundraising](http://www.meningitis-trust.org/fundraising)

#### Give some money

By giving a single donation, setting up a direct debit or leaving a legacy, you can help make a real difference.

[www.meningitis-trust.org/give-a-donation](http://www.meningitis-trust.org/give-a-donation)

### 24-hour freephone nurse-led helpline

**0808 80 10 388**

[www.meningitis-trust.org](http://www.meningitis-trust.org)

[info@meningitis-trust.org](mailto:info@meningitis-trust.org)

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References for content of this leaflet are available on our website.



**Meningitis Trust**

## Meningitis can affect anyone

*Knowing the signs and symptoms can save lives*



### Meningitis can affect anyone

Meningitis can strike quickly and kill within hours – its impact can last a lifetime.

Babies and young children are the most at risk, with around half of all cases occurring in the under 5s. Risk increases again for teenagers and young adults and also in the over 55s.

Despite vaccines being available for some types of meningitis, there are still thousands of cases in the UK every year.

### Knowing the signs and symptoms to look out for and the action to take saves lives.

*"I started to get flu-like symptoms, which got progressively worse. Alarm bells started to ring so I checked my Meningitis Trust symptoms card. I had six of the symptoms. I went to hospital straight away. I'm so grateful I had the card, it saved my life."*



**Helen Richardson** who contracted meningococcal disease whilst at university.

## What is meningitis?

Meningitis is inflammation of the membranes that surround and protect the brain and spinal cord. Many different organisms can cause meningitis, but the most common are viruses and bacteria.

**Viral meningitis** can make people very ill but is rarely life-threatening. Most people fully recover, but sufferers can be left with after-effects such as headaches, tiredness and memory loss.

**Bacterial meningitis** can kill, so urgent medical attention is essential. Most people make a good recovery, but many are left with debilitating after-effects such as deafness, epilepsy and brain damage.

## Meningococcal septicaemia

Meningococcal bacteria are the most common cause of bacterial meningitis in the UK. They can cause both meningitis and septicaemia (blood poisoning), which people often have together. It is important to be aware of all the signs and symptoms.

## The rash

One sign of septicaemia is spots or a rash that do not fade under pressure when the side of a clear drinking glass is pressed firmly against the skin – see 'Glass Test'.



- Spots/rash may fade at first, keep checking
- If someone's condition gets worse **do not wait for a rash**, it can appear late or not at all
- A fever with spots/rash that do not fade under pressure is a medical emergency
- The spots/rash are more difficult to see on darker skin, check paler areas

## Be aware of all the signs and symptoms

Meningitis and septicaemia often happen together.

Symptoms can appear in any order. Some may not appear at all.

Early symptoms can include fever, headache, vomiting, muscle pain and fever with cold hands and feet.

Someone with meningitis or septicaemia can get a lot worse very quickly. Keep checking them.

**Do not wait for a rash, it can appear late or not at all.**

**Trust your instincts – get medical help immediately.**

If you suspect meningitis or septicaemia, get medical help immediately. You can:

- Call NHS Direct/NHS 24 or your GP
- Go to your nearest accident and emergency department
- Dial 999 for an ambulance
- Describe the symptoms and say you think it could be meningitis or septicaemia.
- Early diagnosis can be difficult. If you have had advice and are still worried, get medical help again.

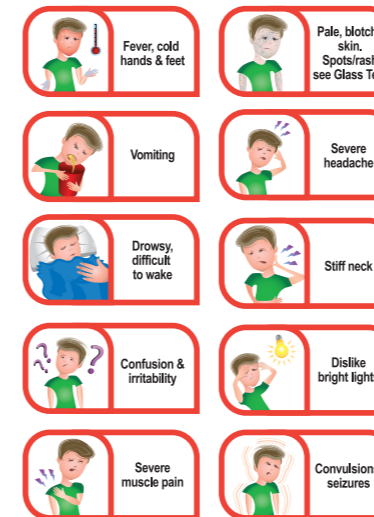
## Common signs and symptoms of meningitis and septicaemia

Knowing the signs and symptoms of meningitis and septicaemia saves lives. Make sure you know what to look for. Download our free app at [www.meningitisapp.co.uk](http://www.meningitisapp.co.uk)

### Babies and Toddlers



### Children and Adults



## Treatment

If you suspect meningitis it is important to get help as soon as possible. Someone with bacterial meningitis and septicaemia needs rapid admission to hospital and urgent treatment with antibiotics. If they are recognised and treated early, they are less likely to become life-threatening or cause serious after-effects.

## Prevention

Vaccines are available to prevent some types of meningitis and have dramatically reduced the number of cases. Many of these vaccines are part of the Childhood Immunisation Programme and will be offered to all babies from 2 months of age.

**There is no vaccine to prevent meningococcal group B disease, which is the most common cause of bacterial meningitis in the UK.**

Until there are vaccines to prevent all types it is important to know the signs and symptoms and act quickly.

## After meningitis and septicaemia

Most people who have meningitis and septicaemia will make a good recovery, but some will suffer after-effects.

After-effects are more common following bacterial meningitis or septicaemia. Families can be bereaved and survivors can be left with lifelong disabilities such as deafness, epilepsy, brain damage, limb loss, learning difficulties and behavioural problems.

Viral meningitis is usually less serious but can leave people suffering headaches, tiredness and memory loss.

**Whatever the outcome, people's lives are changed forever.**