

Meningitis can devastate lives within hours and its impact can last a lifetime.

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

We are a new charity with almost 30 years' experience, formed in 2013 by bringing together Meningitis UK and Meningitis Trust, founders of the meningitis movement in the UK. We believe in what we do and know we can achieve so much more now that we're together.

We offer practical, emotional and financial support for all those living with the impact of the disease. We support individuals, and their families, including those who have been bereaved, helping to rebuild lives after meningitis and septicaemia.

We can:

- Listen; and answer your questions about meningitis and septicaemia
- 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 for unexpected costs following meningitis
- 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.

**Meningitis Helpline**  
**0808 80 10 388 (UK)**

Front cover: Liz Curry - Liz had meningococcal disease aged 53.

**Meningitis Now is the UK's leading meningitis charity. We are saving lives and rebuilding futures through awareness, research and support.**

Without your invaluable support, determined spirit and dedication, we couldn't fund awareness, research and support. Here's how you can help:

#### Become 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.

#### 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.

#### Raise some money

Take part in one of our extreme challenges or simply host afternoon tea with friends - there are so many ways you can raise money and have fun doing it.

#### Make a donation

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



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**0808 80 10 388 (UK)**

**[www.MeningitisNow.org](http://www.MeningitisNow.org)**

Tel: 01453 768000  
Fax: 01453 768001  
[info@meningitisnow.org](mailto:info@meningitisnow.org)

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



## 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.**



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

*"I started to get flu-like symptoms, which got progressively worse. Alarm bells started to ring so I checked my 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."*

## 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 unwell but is rarely life-threatening. Most people make a good recovery, 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, brain damage and, where septicaemia occurs, limb loss.

## 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

People with septicaemia may develop a rash of tiny red 'pin pricks' which can develop into purple bruising.

**THIS RASH DOES NOT FADE UNDER PRESSURE. DO THE GLASS TEST.**



Press the side of a clear glass firmly against the skin.

Spots/rash may fade at first  
Keep checking

- Fever with spots/rash that do not fade under pressure is a **MEDICAL EMERGENCY**
- **DO NOT WAIT FOR A RASH**, if someone is ill and getting worse get medical help immediately
- **ON DARK SKIN** the spots/rash can be more difficult to see. Do not wait for a rash. Be aware of all the signs and symptoms.

## Be aware

Meningitis and septicaemia often happen together. Be aware of all the signs and symptoms.

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

Early symptoms can include:

fever headache vomiting

muscle pain

fever with cold hands and feet

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

## Trust your instincts – get medical help immediately

If you are concerned it could be meningitis or septicaemia, you can:

Call NHS 111 or your GP

In an emergency you can:

- Dial 999 for an ambulance
- Go to your nearest accident and emergency department

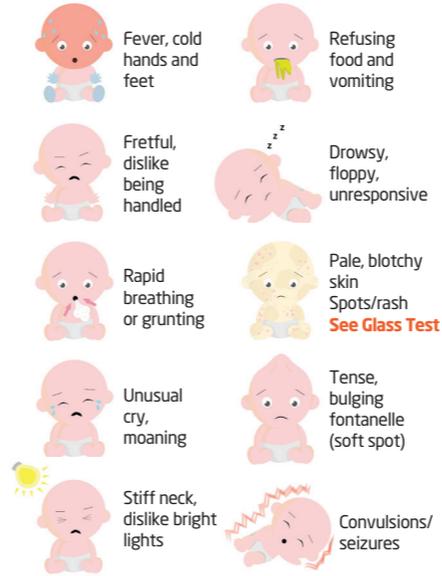
Describe the symptoms and say you think it could be meningitis or septicaemia.

Early diagnosis can be difficult. If you have had advice and are still concerned, get medical help again.

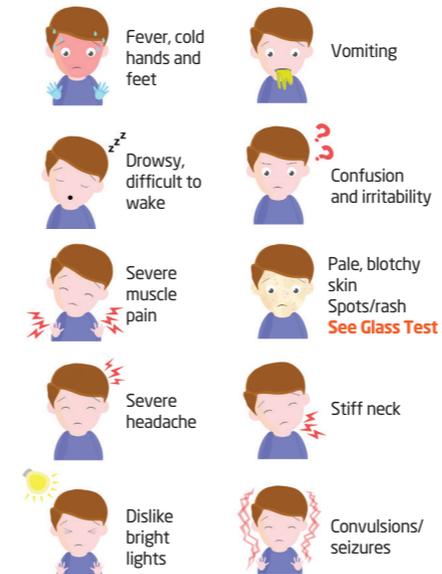
## Common signs and symptoms of meningitis and septicaemia

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 still no routine vaccine available to prevent meningococcal group B (Men B) disease, which is the most common cause of bacterial meningitis in the UK. A Men B vaccine is available privately and you should consult your own GP surgery for details. This vaccine is being considered for future use in the Childhood Immunisation Programme.

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 still have a big impact, leaving people with headaches, tiredness and memory loss.

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