Know the Symptoms

Please keep this for reference

What should I do if I am worried about someone who is ill?
Trust your instincts. Someone who has meningitis or septicaemia could become seriously ill very quickly. Get medical help immediately if you are worried about someone who is ill.

Tumbler Test
If someone is ill and gets a rash, do the ‘Tumbler Test’. Check for spots over the whole body.

If a glass tumbler is pressed firmly against a septicaemic rash, the marks will not fade. You will be able to see the marks through the glass.

IF THIS HAPPENS GET MEDICAL HELP IMMEDIATELY.

Other symptoms in babies:
- Tense or bulging soft spot on their head
- Refusing to feed
- Intabile when picked up, with a high pitched or moaning cry
- A stiff body with jerky movements, or else floppy and lifeless

For more information call
Meningitis Research Foundation’s
Freefone 24 hour helpline
080 8800 3344 (UK)
1800 41 33 44 (Republic of Ireland)
or visit our website www.meningitis.org

Spot Meningitis Symptoms - life saving information available by text in the UK, simply text MRF to 82088.
This text will be a standard rate text. MRF will not charge you for the video but data charges from your operator will apply.

Our vision is a world free from meningitis and septicaemia. That’s why we fund vital scientific research into the prevention, detection and treatment of the diseases.

We raise awareness of the symptoms and the need for urgent medical help by campaigns and leaflets like these, and provide resources for health professionals. We also offer written and audio information in 22 languages, details of which are on our website. Information is provided free of charge. We also support people affected by meningitis and septicaemia through our Freefone 24 hour helpline and other support services.

If you would like to help in the fight against meningitis and septicaemia, please call your local office. Thank you.

Meningitis Research Foundation:
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Bristol BS35 2BS
Tel 01454 281811
28 Alva Street Edinburgh
EH2 4PY
Tel 0131 510 2345

71 Botanic Avenue Belfast
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Meningitis and septicaemia

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Meningococcal disease is the most common serious kind. They can occur together or separately. Meningitis and septicaemia are caused by the same germs.

Brain and spinal cord. Septicaemia is blood poisoning. Meningitis means swelling of the lining around the brain.

About four people in every 100,000 will get the disease each year in the UK, and five in every 100,000 in the Republic of Ireland.

The bacteria that cause the disease are very common: at any time about one in ten of us has them in our noses and throats without ever knowing they are there, and for most of us this is harmless. We pass the bacteria between each other by close contact (e.g. coughing, sneezing, kissing). Usually we have to be in very close or regular contact with someone for the bacteria to pass between us. Even when this happens, most of us will not become ill because we have natural immunity. The bacteria cannot live longer than a few moments outside the body.

About one in ten people have not already had it. The Hib vaccine against meningitis and septicaemia caused by the Hib germ. It is given in an injection that also protects against other childhood diseases.

The pneumococcal vaccine against meningitis and septicaemia and other serious disease caused by the most common pneumococcal germs.

The MMR (measles, mumps, rubella) vaccine. This also protects against meningitis caused by mumps and measles.

There are also meningitis vaccines for elderly people, older children and adults with at risk health conditions, and a vaccine for travellers to certain parts of the world.

The charity funds research into diagnosis, treatments and after effects. It answers the symptoms and the questions about meningitis and septicaemia apart from other diseases. It is vital to know the symptoms and to get medical help immediately if you are worried that an ill person may have the disease. Symptoms are listed in this leaflet.

The antibiotics he had in hospital kill the bacteria that cause the disease and so help stop it from spreading. Public health action is sometimes also taken in schools, colleges or nurseries dealing with cases.

In the early stages, it can be very difficult to tell meningitis and septicaemia apart from other diseases. It is vital to know the symptoms and to get medical help immediately if you are worried that an ill person may have the disease. Symptoms are listed in this leaflet.

Can meningitis and septicaemia be prevented?

- The MenC vaccine, against Group C meningococcal disease. This vaccine is also available to older children and young people who have not already had it.
- The Hib vaccine against meningitis and septicaemia caused by the Hib germ. It is given in an injection that also protects against some other childhood diseases.
- The pneumococcal vaccine against meningitis and septicaemia and other serious disease caused by the most common pneumococcal germs.
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Can the disease be treated?

- Babys and young children are at higher risk than older children and adults, partly because their immune systems are not fully developed.

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How would I know if I’ve got it?

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In the early stages, it can be very difficult to tell meningitis and septicaemia apart from other diseases. It is vital to know the symptoms and to get medical help immediately if you are worried that an ill person may have the disease. Symptoms are listed in this leaflet.

How common is meningococcal disease?

- ...we do not yet fully understand why some people get ill from germs that are harmless to most of us. Babies and young children are at higher risk than older children and adults, partly because their immune systems are not fully developed.

Can meningitis and septicaemia be prevented?

Vaccines give excellent protection, but cannot yet prevent all forms. For example, there is no available vaccine against Group B meningococcal disease, the most common form of the disease in the UK & Ireland.

The meningitis vaccines in the childhood immunisation programme are:

- As the incubation period for the disease is usually less than the time it takes for the vaccine to work, it is still vital to know the symptoms.

What are meningitis and septicaemia?

Meningitis means swelling of the lining around the brain and spinal cord. Septicaemia is blood poisoning caused by the same germs.

They can occur together or separately. Meningitis and septicaemia are caused by many kinds of germs, but meningococcal disease is the most common serious kind. It is very dangerous and can come on very quickly.

About one in ten people have not already had it. The Hib vaccine against meningitis and septicaemia caused by the Hib germ. It is given in an injection that also protects against other childhood diseases.

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The MMR (measles, mumps, rubella) vaccine. This also protects against meningitis caused by mumps and measles.

There are also meningitis vaccines for elderly people, older children and adults with at risk health conditions, and a vaccine for travellers to certain parts of the world.

To find out more about meningitis vaccines, call the Foundation’s helpline.

The antibiotic he had in hospital killed the bacteria, so he’s not infectious any more.

If someone gets Group C disease, the same group of people who got antibiotics will be offered MenC vaccine if they have not already had it. Even if they have had the MenC vaccine in the past, close contacts may need another dose, depending on the situation.

As the incubation period for the disease is usually less than the time it takes for the vaccine to work, it is still vital to know the symptoms.

What about vaccines?

There is no need to avoid people who have been in contact with the disease.

Remember one in ten people carry the bacteria, so we come into contact with them all the time.

My daughter’s boyfriend works in a factory where there has been a case of meningitis. Should I stop her seeing him?

My sister has the disease. Where can my family get support?

There is no need to avoid people who have been in contact with a case.

Remember one in ten people carry the bacteria, so we come into contact with them all the time.

What to do if someone gets meningitis?

If someone gets meningitis, there are certain things that need to be done to protect the community, and will also advise schools, colleges or nurseries dealing with cases.

This doctor will make sure that anyone at especially increased risk of meningococcal disease is contacted and offered very strong antibiotics (usually rifampicin or ciprofloxacin). This is to kill the bacteria that cause the disease and so help stop it from spreading. Public health action is sometimes also taken in cases of Hib meningitis, but it is not needed after a single case of any other kind of meningitis.

Someone I know has got meningitis. Should I have these antibiotics?

The antibiotics are usually only given to people living in the same household as the patient, and to their boy/girlfriend. The antibiotics he had in hospital kill the bacteria, so he’s not infectious any more.

It is perfectly safe for your son to play with a boy who has had meningitis.

The antibiotics he had in hospital killed the bacteria, so he’s not infectious any more.

Is it safe for my son to play with a boy who has had meningitis?

Yes. It is perfectly safe for your son to play with a boy who has had meningitis. The antibiotics he had in hospital killed the bacteria, so he’s not infectious any more.

What about vaccines?

- There are also meningitis vaccines for elderly people, older children and adults with at risk health conditions, and a vaccine for travellers to certain parts of the world.

To find out more about meningitis vaccines, call the Foundation’s helpline.

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- Can meningitis and septicaemia be prevented?

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How do people get it?

People get the disease when the bacteria move from the nose and throat and invade the body.

Is there an incubation period?

Yes. Symptoms normally appear within about five days of picking up the bacteria.