

Dear Parent or Carer,

You may have seen news stories about the meningitis cases in Canterbury, Kent recently. We know this can be worrying but we would like to reassure you that this situation is very rare, and we have not seen cases locally.

What is meningitis?

Meningitis is an infection of the membranes around the brain and spinal cord; it can be caused by a virus or bacteria. The current cases in Canterbury are caused by a bacteria called Meningococcal B (Men B) but there are other types of meningococcal bacteria. This bacteria can also cause blood poisoning or sepsis. Meningitis and sepsis can both be very serious.

In Derby we typically see only 1 or 2 single cases of these each year, it is very rare. In the country there are usually around 300 cases a year, or around one each day. We do not normally see groups of cases, and if infection is spread between people, it is usually those who live in the same house.

Anyone can get meningitis or sepsis, but it is more common in babies and young children, teenagers and young adults, older people and people with a weak immune system.

Close contact such as living together, kissing, sharing drinks or vapes is needed to spread this infection. It is not as easy to catch as measles or flu.

When it starts, meningitis or sepsis can look like a cold or the flu, but someone with this will usually become very unwell in a few hours. Keep checking on someone who is poorly. They may:

- have a high temperature or fever
- be sick
- be very sleepy, hard to wake up or confused
- have aches and pains
- have blotchy skin or spots
- have a headache or want to be in the dark

If you are not sure whether someone may have meningitis or sepsis call NHS111 for advice.

If you are worried that someone may have meningitis or sepsis trust your instincts and call 999 or go to your nearest A&E.

A rash that does not fade when you press the side of a clear glass to it can be a sign of sepsis. If you see this, call 999.



What can I do to protect my child against meningitis and sepsis?

There are 3 things you can do to protect your child against meningitis and sepsis: make sure your child is up to date with vaccinations, keep good hygiene and know what to look for.

There are several vaccines that protect against diseases that can go on to cause meningitis and sepsis. Check your child's GP record to ensure they are up to date with vaccinations; your GP Practice will be able to guide you on catching up with any missed vaccinations.

The current cases in Canterbury are caused by Men B. The vaccination against Men B is offered to babies, because this is when they are most vulnerable to becoming seriously unwell. If you have young children under the age of 2, please ensure they have received this vaccination. The Men B vaccine is not currently recommended above this age routinely. A small number of people in Canterbury are being offered the vaccination, but this is separate advice.

Other types of Meningococcal bacteria called A, C, W, and Y can also be vaccinated against. Children are offered this at school when they are in year 9. If your child has missed their MenACWY vaccine they can catch-up:

- Any Y9, Y10 or Y11 child, or home-educated child of this age, who missed the MenACWY vaccine can attend a clinic with the school immunisation team – you can book an appointment by calling 0333 3583 397, option 5, option 2.
- Young people who have left secondary school and up to the age of 25 can get the MenACWY vaccine by contacting their GP.

Good hygiene can protect against many different infections. This includes:

- Washing your hands regularly with soap and water, including after using the toilet and before eating/drinking.
- Do not share items that have touched your mouth with others, including plates, forks, spoons, glasses, cigarettes, vapes etc.

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If you are worried that someone may have meningitis or sepsis trust your instincts and call 999 or go to your nearest A&E.

Yours sincerely,



Dr Robyn Dewis, Director of Public Health for Derby City



For more information, please see:

- [Meningitis and septicaemia – information for students in schools and sixth form colleges \(poster\)](#)- also available as a webpage: [Meningitis and septicaemia – information for students in schools and sixth form colleges \(text only\)](#)
- [A guide to the MenACWY vaccine \(print version\)](#) – also available as a webpage: [A guide to the MenACWY vaccine](#)
- [Meningitis: don't ignore the signs and symptoms \(print version\)](#) – also available as a webpage: [Meningitis: don't ignore the signs and symptoms](#)

