

Class Test for Septicaemia

If someone is ill and gets a rash, do the "Class 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.



Photos courtesy of the Meningitis Trust

IF THIS HAPPENS GET MEDICAL HELP IMMEDIATELY

Watch out for tiny red or brown pin prick marks, which can change into larger red or purple blotches or blood blisters.

The rash can be harder to see on dark skin, so check for spots especially on paler areas like palms of the hands, soles of the feet, the stomach, inside the eyelids and on the roof of the mouth.

Remember, a very ill person needs medical help even if there are only a few spots, a rash that fades or no rash at all.

Where can I get more information on Meningitis and Septicaemia?

Further information is available from

National Immunisation Office - www.immunisation.ie

Health Protection Surveillance Centre - www.hpsc.ie

Meningitis Research Foundation - www.meningitis.org

Meningitis Trust - www.meningitis-trust.ie



How can I recognise the symptoms?

In most cases someone with meningitis or septicaemia will become seriously ill rapidly. The signs and symptoms are listed in this leaflet. **Not all these signs and symptoms may show at once.**

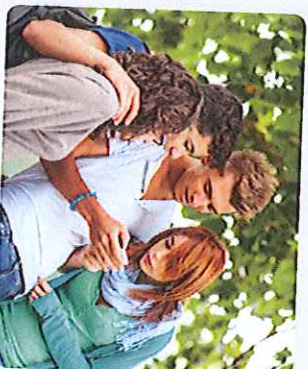
Is there a vaccine?

There is as yet no vaccine to protect against all strains of meningitis. However, there are vaccines which offer protection against some forms of the disease and research to develop vaccines against other strains is continuing.

Vaccines are available to protect against Hib (Haemophilus influenzae type b) and pneumococcal meningitis. These vaccines are offered to all babies and infants. (See information leaflet 'Your Child's Immunisation - A guide for parents', which is available from your local health centre or on the National Immunisation Office website - www.immunisation.ie/en/ChildhoodImmunisation)

Is there any other way to prevent Meningitis?

Apart from vaccines, there is no known way to protect against meningitis. However, awareness of the signs and symptoms of meningitis and septicaemia helps prevent death and disability.



Meningitis & Septicaemia Am I at risk?



Fidhneamhacht na Seachtúe Síne
Health Service Executive

Meningitis & Septicaemia

am I at risk?

The risk of contracting meningitis or meningococcal septicaemia is very small, even if you have been in contact with someone who has developed these infections.

Only very close family contacts of the patient are at an increased risk of contracting the disease. With meningococcal meningitis, and sometimes with Haemophilus influenzae type b, antibiotics are offered to these close contacts. They reduce, but cannot eliminate, the risk of family members becoming ill.

Other contacts, such as school friends and workmates are not usually at increased risk and do not normally need specific treatment or investigation.

The bacteria which cause meningitis and septicaemia are very common.

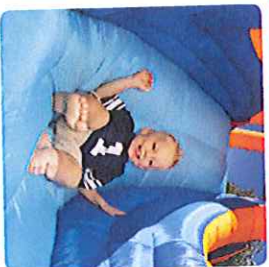
Many of us will carry them at some stage in our lives without developing any illness. Only a tiny proportion of the population develop meningitis or septicaemia if they come into contact with the bacteria.

The bacteria are very weak.

They survive for only a short period of time outside the body, so they cannot live for a long time in the air and are not carried on household objects such as clothes or furniture.

Although meningitis and meningococcal septicaemia are not common diseases they are very dangerous and can develop rapidly.

That is why it is vital that everyone knows the signs and symptoms to watch out for.



What is

Meningitis?

Meningitis means an inflammation of the lining of the brain. It can be caused by several different organisms. Some are bacteria and some are viruses.

Bacterial Meningitis is uncommon - but it can be very serious and requires urgent medical attention and treatment with antibiotics.

Viral Meningitis is less serious and cannot be helped by antibiotic treatment. The symptoms are similar so hospital tests may be needed to tell the difference between bacterial and viral meningitis.

What is meningococcal septicaemia?

Meningococcal septicaemia is a type of blood poisoning which is caused by the same bacteria that cause meningococcal meningitis. In septicaemia, the bacteria release toxins into the blood which break down the walls of the blood vessels allowing blood to leak out under the skin. This leaking causes a characteristic rash of purple bruises or blood blisters and reduces the amount of blood reaching vital organs such as the liver and kidneys.

How do people contract

Meningitis and Septicaemia?

At any one time, a number of the population will be carrying the bacteria which can cause meningococcal meningitis or septicaemia. Many of us carry them in the back of the nose and the throat without ever realising they are there. However, in a few people, the bacteria overcome the body's immune defences and pass through the lining of the nose and throat into the blood stream. Once in the blood, they can cause two types of disease: Meningococcal Meningitis and Septicaemia.



Meningitis and Septicaemia Know the signs

Symptoms	Septicaemia	Meningitis
Fever and/or vomiting	✓	✓
Cold hands and feet	✓	
Breathing fast/breathless	✓	
Limb/joint/muscle pain	✓	
Pale, blotchy skin. Spots/rash – see Class Test	✓	✓ (Not present in all cases)
Drowsy/difficult to wake	✓	✓
Confused and irritable	✓	✓
Severe headache		✓
Dislike of bright lights		✓ (Less common in young children)
Stiff neck		✓ (Less common in young children)
Convulsions/seizures		✓

In addition to the symptoms shown above babies may also suffer from

- Tense or bulging fontanelle – (soft spot on top of head)
- Refusing to feed
- Fretfulness with a shrill or moaning cry when picked up
- Body stiffening with jerky movements, or a floppy body

And particularly for students:

If you think it's a bad dose of flu, a heavy hangover or drugs don't just leave it – check out the above symptoms - if you have any of them tell someone - if a friend is looking really rough, stick around. If it gets worse rapidly, get doctor's help immediately.