

Meningitis Outbreak in Kent - Information for Patients

We understand that hearing about meningitis can be worrying. We want to share clear and simple information to help you know what to do.

What's happening?

The United Kingdom Health Security Agency (UKHSA) has identified a meningitis outbreak in Kent, caused by the bacterium meningococcal B. Health teams are working to control it. People who have been in close contact with someone who is unwell are being identified and supported.

It is currently considered to be very localised to the Kent area, and further action is being taken there. We will await further information from the UKHSA in case of further spread.

What you should do now:

1. Review Your/Your Child's Vaccination Record

There are several strains of the bacteria, and we have 2 different types of vaccination for these.

- Men ACWY: offered to children aged 13-14 (but can be given up to age 25)
- Men B: offered to children with their first vaccinations starting at 8 weeks.

You can check your/ your child's vaccination record by:

- Looking in a child's Red Book
- Checking any school vaccination correspondence

If you still need help, please contact us using our online form.

Right now:

- There are **no changes to the vaccine programme**
- The meningitis B vaccine is **not being offered more widely**

2. Treating close contacts

If your child is identified as a close contact, you will be contacted directly by health teams. Close contacts may be offered antibiotics to help prevent illness. You **do not** need to contact us to request antibiotics unless you have been advised to do so.

3. Keep yourself safe

Reduce your risk of infection by:

- Washing hands often
- Do not share drinks, vapes, or cigarettes
- Cover your mouth when you cough or sneeze, preferably using a tissue that you dispose of after each use

Meningitis, due to any strain, can become serious quickly. Get urgent medical help if you/your child has:

- A rash that does not fade when pressed
- High temperature
- Bad headache
- Stiff neck
- Vomiting
- Cold hands or feet
- Confusion

Further information

Meningitis B patient helpline, run by UKHSA, is now available. Patients can call 0344 225 3861, Monday to Friday from 9am to 5pm, if they have no symptoms but are concerned they have been in contact with a confirmed case or have a general enquiry