

SAFETY ALERT

Meningococcal Disease (Meningitis B)



A recent outbreak of Meningitis B in the UK has resulted in fatalities. Although the cluster is localised in Kent, NASPM is issuing this alert as a timely reminder for all schools. Awareness of symptoms and prompt action can save lives.

What is Meningococcal Disease?

Meningococcal disease is a serious bacterial infection that can cause **meningitis** (inflammation of the lining around the brain and spinal cord) and **septicaemia** (blood poisoning). Both conditions can rapidly lead to sepsis. Onset is often sudden, and early antibiotic treatment is critical.

There are several strains. The MenACWY vaccine, routinely offered to pupils in Years 9 and 10, protects against strains A, C, W and Y — **but not MenB**, which is why awareness of symptoms matters for all school communities, regardless of vaccination status.

Symptoms to Watch For

Symptoms can appear in any order and not all will be present. Early signs can mimic flu or a cold, but a person with meningococcal disease will typically deteriorate quickly. Staff and parents should be alert to any combination of the following:

- Sudden onset of high fever
- Severe and worsening headache
- Stiff neck
- Vomiting and diarrhoea
- Joint and muscle pain
- Dislike of bright lights
- Very cold hands and feet
- A rash that does not fade when pressed with a glass
- Seizures
- Confusion or delirium
- Extreme drowsiness or difficulty waking

If any person shows these symptoms, seek urgent medical help immediately. Contact a GP, call NHS 111, or dial 999 in an emergency. Do not wait. Early treatment is lifesaving.

Recommended Actions for Schools

No specific action is required unless your school is directly advised by a local health protection team. However, as good practice, we recommend the following:

- Brief first aid and welfare staff on early symptom recognition.
- Promote high standards of respiratory hygiene across the school (Catch it, Bin it, Kill it).
- Share the NHS symptom guidance with parents and carers as a general awareness communication.
- Ensure your emergency and first aid procedures are current and accessible to relevant staff.

Further Information

NHS Guidance

www.nhs.uk/conditions/meningitis

Meningitis Research Foundation

0808 800 3344
Mon–Fri, 9am–5pm

Meningitis Now

0808 80 10 388
Mon–Thu 9am–4pm, Fri 9am–1pm