

How to Avoid Meningitis?

NHS Advice

How meningitis is spreading

Meningitis is usually caused by a bacterial or viral infection. Bacterial meningitis is rarer but more serious than viral meningitis.

Infections that cause meningitis can be spread through:

- sneezing
- coughing
- kissing
- sharing utensils, cutlery and toothbrushes

Meningitis is usually caught from people who carry these viruses or bacteria in their nose or throat but aren't ill themselves. It can also be caught from someone with meningitis, but this is less common.

Prevention

Vaccinations against meningitis:

There are vaccinations offer some protection against certain causes of meningitis.

These include the:

- [meningococcal B vaccine](#) – offered to babies at 8 weeks, 12 weeks and between 12 and 13 months
- [6-in-1 vaccine](#) – offered to babies at 8, 12 and 16 weeks of age and at 18 months
- [pneumococcal vaccine for babies](#) – offered to babies at 16 weeks and between 12 and 13 months old
- [MMRV vaccine](#) – offered to babies aged between 12 and 13 months, and 18 months
- [meningococcal ACWY vaccine](#) – offered to young people at around 14 years of age

Hygiene:

- Washing your hands with hot water and soap regularly
- Putting your hand to your mouth when sneezing and coughing or use a tissue
- Avoid sharing cutlery or drinking cups, or other utensils.

When to get medical help?

You should get medical advice as soon as possible if you're concerned that you or your child could have meningitis:

- Trust your instincts and don't wait until a rash develops.
- Phone 999 for an ambulance or go to your nearest accident and emergency (A&E) department immediately if you think you or your child might be seriously ill.
- Phone 111 or your GP practice for advice if you're not sure if it's anything serious or you think you may have been exposed to someone with meningitis.