

## Joint communication from the Director of Public Health and Executive Director of Children's Services

Dear Headteachers, Principals, CEOs of Multi Academy Trusts and Early Years Providers

### Re: Outbreak of invasive meningococcal disease notified in Kent

Understandably, as head teachers you may have some anxiety and concern regarding the recent outbreak of invasive meningococcal disease reported in Kent.

Currently there are no confirmed cases of Meningitis in Hertfordshire or the East of England.

Hertfordshire County Council would like to reassure you the situation is being monitored closely. We are working with NHS partners and following UK Health Security Agency guidance to reduce the risk of meningitis among Hertfordshire residents.

Meningococcal disease (meningitis and septicaemia) is an uncommon but serious disease caused by meningococcal bacteria. Very occasionally, the meningococcal bacteria can cause serious illness, (inflammation of the lining of the brain) and septicaemia (blood poisoning), which can rapidly lead to sepsis [Symptoms of sepsis - NHS](#).

Spread is from person to person through respiratory droplets and direct contact with nose and throat secretions. About 10% of us carry the bacteria harmlessly in our nose and throat. Close and prolonged contact is needed to pass the bacteria to others.

The onset of illness is often sudden and early diagnosis and treatment with antibiotics are vital.

Early symptoms, which may not always be present, include:

- a rash that doesn't fade when pressed with a glass
- 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
- seizures
- confusion/delirium
- extreme sleepiness/difficulty waking

## [Meningitis - NHS](#)

The MenACWY vaccination provides good protection against groups A, C, W, and Y. It is routinely offered to teenagers in school Years 9 and 10. However, this vaccine does not protect against all forms of meningitis.

Other groups such as Men B can circulate in younger adults, which is why it's important to know how to spot the symptoms of meningitis and septicaemia as early detection and treatment can save lives.

Outbreaks of meningococcal disease are uncommon but can occur when groups of people mix together. Young people in schools, university or college can be at risk of meningitis because they mix with other students, some of whom are unknowingly carrying the bacteria at the back of their nose and throat.

### **If you suspect Meningococcal meningitis and septicaemia: what you need to do**

Be vigilant and raise awareness of signs and symptoms of meningitis and septicaemia among staff and pupils.

Anyone who becomes unwell with symptoms of meningitis and septicaemia should seek medical help urgently at the closest Accident and Emergency Department or by dialling 999. Early treatment can be lifesaving.

Inform UK Health Security Agency Health Protection Team if you have a case of meningococcal disease in your setting. They will carry out a risk assessment and organise antibiotics for household and any other close contacts.

Tel: 0300 303 8537 or email [eastofenglandhpt@ukhsa.gov.uk](mailto:eastofenglandhpt@ukhsa.gov.uk)

**We ask that you encourage all parents and carers to check that their child's recommended meningitis vaccinations are up to date.**

[Health protection in children and young people settings, including education - GOV.UK](#)

[Managing specific infectious diseases: A to Z - GOV.UK](#)

The UK Health Security Agency is issuing daily updates on the Men B outbreak [Cases of invasive meningococcal disease notified in Kent - GOV.UK](#).

**For further information on meningococcal meningitis and septicaemia:**

[Meningitis - NHS](#)

[Symptoms of sepsis - NHS](#)

[Meningococcal disease: guidance on public health management - GOV.UK](#)

[Health protection in children and young people settings, including education - GOV.UK](#)

[Managing specific infectious diseases: A to Z - GOV.UK](#)

[Cases of invasive meningococcal disease notified in Kent - GOV.UK](#)

[What is meningitis? Symptoms, risks and how to protect yourself – UK Health Security Agency](#)

Yours sincerely



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