

Schools Health Protection Update

Hertfordshire County Council



July 2026

Health Protection Update: Summer Term

This newsletter contains recommended Public Health content to inform school staff, assemblies, and important messaging home to parents.

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Information for Parents/Carers/Guardians

Meningitis, Norovirus & Measles

Meningitis

Meningitis is an infection of the protective membranes that surround the brain and spinal cord (meninges). It is most common in babies, young children, teenagers and young adults.

Symptoms of meningitis can develop suddenly. Find out about the symptoms of meningitis here [Meningitis - NHS](#).

[Meningitis – Don't ignore the signs poster](#)

Meningitis is usually caused by a bacterial or viral infection. Bacterial meningitis is rarer but more serious than viral meningitis. Meningococcal group B (MenB) bacteria can cause serious, life-threatening illnesses including meningitis and septicaemia which can both lead to sepsis.

How meningitis is spread

The viruses and bacteria that cause meningitis can be spread through close contact with a person who has them. This can include:

- contact with the person's spit, such as kissing them, or sharing drinks or vapes
- being in close contact with the person for a lot of time, such as living in the same home

Meningitis is usually caught from people who carry these viruses or bacteria in their nose or throat but are not ill themselves.

Meningitis vaccination

Several vaccinations are available that offer some protection against meningitis. The [NHS vaccination schedule](#) protects people against many causes of meningitis.

The MenACWY vaccine is recommended for all teenagers. It's usually given to children when they're 13 or 14 years old (school year 9). If they missed having the vaccine at school, you can get it up to the age of 25 years.

From 20 July 2026, the Men B vaccine will also be offered as a one-off vaccination programme to:

- teenagers aged 17 or 18 who are born between 1 September 2007 and 31 August 2008

- young people aged 24 or under who are starting university or some types of residential further education for the first time

The national booking system is expected to go live on 13th July where you can book an appointment directly at a community pharmacy. Two doses are essential for protection.

Meningitis Outbreaks

There have been a few cases of Meningitis B (Men B) reported in England recently and while Men B remains rare it can be serious if not treated quickly. It is important to know the symptoms and act quickly. Please see here for the symptoms and what to do if you suspect your child may have meningitis [Meningitis - NHS](#)

Norovirus

Norovirus is a stomach bug that causes sickness and diarrhoea and is easily transmitted through contact with people with the infection and any surfaces or objects that have been contaminated with the virus. If an individual develops symptoms of diarrhoea and/or vomiting, please do not send them into school until they have not been sick or had diarrhoea for 2 days.

In addition, taking the following simple precautions can help reduce the risk of Norovirus spreading.

- Practice good hand hygiene with soap and warm water. Remember that alcohol-based hand sanitisers are not effective against norovirus.
- Disinfect contaminated surfaces, use bleach-based cleaning products. Clean kitchen and toilet areas regularly.
- Wear appropriate PPE when handling bodily fluid such as vomit or diarrhoea.
- If you have had Norovirus, avoid cooking and helping to prepare meals for others until 2 days after symptoms have stopped, as norovirus can be spread through contaminated food when it is handled by people shedding the virus.
- Stay hydrated -vomiting and diarrhoea causes your body to lose water and salts, which can lead to dehydration, so it is important to drink plenty of fluids to prevent this.

For further information about Norovirus [Norovirus \(vomiting bug\) - NHS](#)

Measles

Measles is increasing across the country, with some outbreaks here in Hertfordshire. We are encouraging people to check that they and their children have had two doses of the MMR or MMRV vaccine, depending on their age.

The free vaccine is a safe and effective way of protecting against measles, as well as mumps and rubella. MMRV also protects against chickenpox. It's important for parents to take up the offer of vaccination for their children when offered at 1 year of age with the second dose at 18 months. If children and young adults have missed these vaccinations in the past, it's important to take up the vaccine now from GPs, particularly in light of the recent cases.

Check your child's Red Book to see if they've received MMR vaccinations as scheduled or check with your GP surgery if you're unsure. Most healthy adults will have developed some immunity to measles but can still receive two doses of the vaccine from their GP too.

Anyone with symptoms is being advised to stay at home and phone their GP or NHS 111 for advice. Measles symptoms to be aware of include:

- high fever
- sore, red, watery eyes
- coughing
- aching and feeling generally unwell
- a blotchy rash, which usually appears after the initial symptoms. The rash looks brown or red on white skin. It may be harder to see on brown and black skin. For more information about measles, see here [Measles - NHS](#)

Vaccination Programme

School Vaccination Programme – Autumn Term

Vaccination is an important way to protect your child from serious illness, reduce the spread of infection in schools, and help safeguard vulnerable members of the community.

This autumn, the School Immunisation Team will be visiting your child's school to offer a range of important vaccinations. Your child may be offered:

The flu vaccine (usually given as a quick and painless nasal spray)

The HPV vaccine for Year 8 pupils (given as an injection in the upper arm)

Catch-up vaccinations if they have missed any routine immunisations

You will receive a consent form via SMS before the session. Please complete this as soon as possible to ensure your child can be vaccinated.

Vaccinations will take place during the school day and will be delivered by a trained NHS team. Most children will be in and out within a few minutes.

If your child misses their vaccination, catch-up clinics will be available, and details will be shared after the school session.

Further information can be found here:

[Service details | Hertfordshire Community NHS Trust](#)

The experienced team of vaccinators can make adjustments to support children who are nervous or anxious, as well as those with additional needs.

If you have any questions, concerns, or would like to discuss your child's vaccination status, please contact the team on 0300 500 555 (Option 7).

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Travelling Abroad? – Protect yourself from mosquito bites

The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) is reminding people to take precautions against mosquito-borne infections during the upcoming travel period.

Mosquito bites can have a range of consequences, from mild irritation to more serious health risks. Most commonly, bites cause itching, redness and swelling due to an allergic reaction to mosquito saliva, which can sometimes lead to skin infections if scratched excessively. More significantly, mosquitoes can transmit infectious diseases such as malaria, dengue, Zika virus and West Nile virus, particularly in certain parts of the world. These illnesses can cause symptoms ranging from fever and joint pain to severe complications affecting the nervous system or other organs, making mosquito bite prevention an important public health measure both at home and when travelling.

Check the <https://travelhealthpro.org.uk/> website for latest advice on your destination. Consult a GP, pharmacy or travel clinic before travel for advice.

For further information, visit, [Travellers reminded to protect themselves against mosquito bites - GOV.UK](#)

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Petting Farm Guidance

Visiting farms and animal attractions

As we head into the warmer months, some classes may be visiting farms or animal attractions. Public health guidance reminds families that simple hygiene steps help keep children safe, such as washing hands thoroughly with soap and water after animal contact and before eating. Further advice for parents can be found on the UKHSA website.

For further advice and guidance please visit [UKHSA Petting Farm Guidance](#)

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Ticks & Lyme Disease

As children spend more time outdoors during the spring and summer, the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) encourages families to be “**tick aware**”. Ticks can be found in grassy and wooded areas, including parks and school grounds. Simple steps such as staying on paths, checking skin and clothing after outdoor activities, and removing any ticks promptly can help reduce the risk of tickborne infections such as Lyme disease. Further information and practical advice for families is available from UKHSA: [Tick awareness and toolkit - GOV.UK](#)

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Hertfordshire Fire and Rescue Service – Water Safety & contaminated water



 **Be Water Aware**

Warm weather can hide cold-water danger. Phone 999 to get help, tell them to stay calm and **Float** on their back and **Throw** them something to help them float.



Activities in or around water can be a fun pastime, especially during warmer months. In Hertfordshire we have a number of lakes, rivers and reservoirs. And around half accidental drownings happen to people who didn't intend to go into the water.

Between 2000 and 2025 HFRS have attended 120 water related incidents. And the majority of inland water fatalities occur whilst taking part in walking, running, swimming or jumping in. Twenty-one lives were tragically claimed during this period.

It's important to know how to stay safe:

1. Keep your phone charged so you can call 999 if you need help.
2. Keep clear of the water's edge - riverbanks can be unstable after very wet or very hot weather.
3. Follow the proper pathways – they're much safer.
4. Avoid unlit routes near water at night and plan a safer path away from the water.
5. A location app on your phone (like what3words) can help emergency services know your location.

If someone gets in in trouble in the water



If you come across someone, in trouble in the water here's what to do:

- **Phone** 999 straight away to get help. Ask for the fire service – **never** enter the water to attempt a rescue.
- Tell the person to stay calm and **float** on their back.
- **Throw** something that floats if it is safe to do so.

Also, beware of the hidden hazards swimming in open water. This includes debris, unpredictable currents and sudden drops in depth. Also, even on the warmest days, rivers and lakes stay *surprisingly cold*. Why not try one of the county's many organised venues to stay cool in the water – a swimming pool, lido, splash park or water sports centre!

For more information on how to stay safe, visit our dedicated webpage:

hertfordshire.gov.uk/watersafe

Water safety at home

Playing outside is an integral part of a child's development, but it's important that children do so safely, especially around water. Whilst lots of fun can be had with water in the home and garden, easy access to water in familiar spaces can sometimes make it easy to forget the risks it poses.



A report by the Royal Life Saving Society in 2024 shows that, **1 in 3 children who drowned at home did so in places like paddling pools, hot tubs, and ponds.** Please read the information below and follow the advice to help keep your family safe at home.

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Adverse weather and keeping children safe

Extreme weather, such as hot, cold or severe conditions, can affect children's health and wellbeing. Parents and carers can help protect children by ensuring they are dressed appropriately for the weather, stay well hydrated in hot conditions, follow sun-safe advice. Please be aware of weather forecasts and any school communications, as routines or activities may be adapted during adverse weather to help keep children safe and well.

Further information can be found using the resource links below

[Beat the Heat - hot weather advice](#)

[Beat the heat - keep cool at home checklist](#)