



Bacterial Meningitis

Should there be a case of Bacterial Meningitis in your child's classroom, your child may be exposed.

What is Meningitis?

Meningitis is an infection of the delicate linings that cover the brain and of the fluid in these linings. There are 2 types of Meningitis:

- Bacterial Meningitis is very serious and can be life threatening. It is caused by a number of different bacteria and needs urgent medical attention.
- Viral Meningitis is caused by one of three viruses and will get better by itself.

The symptoms for both types of Meningitis are the same.

What causes Bacterial Meningitis?

Meningitis is usually caused by one of three bacteria; Haemophilus influenza (Hib), pneumococcus, and meningococcus. There are a number of different meningococcus bacteria. Each of these bacteria can also cause other serious infections such as septicaemia (blood poisoning), pneumonia and septic arthritis. If your child has been in close personal contact or shared breathing space with someone who gets Meningitis caused by bacteria your child is at risk of getting Meningitis.

When your child was a baby, he should have been vaccinated against 2 of the bacteria that cause Meningitis – Hib and Meningitis C.

What are the symptoms of Bacterial Meningitis?

It is very difficult for anyone other than a doctor to decide which type of Meningitis a child or adult has. The first symptoms are the same for both types of Meningitis. Symptoms often develop quickly and may include:

- High temperature
- Chills – shivering with a high temperature
- Severe headache
- Vomiting
- It hurts to move the head or neck
- The person may complain that light is hurting their eyes

With Bacterial Meningitis a rash can develop anywhere on the body. If your child develops a rash contact your doctor immediately.

What should I do now?

- Let your doctor know your child has been in contact with Meningitis.
- If your child gets any illness with a high temperature over the next 3 weeks, bring them to your doctor. Remind your doctor that there was Meningitis in the school.

If your child develops any of the symptoms of Meningitis, at any time, contact your doctor immediately. If you cannot contact your doctor quickly, bring your child to the nearest Casualty department (A&E).

If your child has been in close contact with a child with Bacterial Meningitis the Doctor may recommend that he take an antibiotic called Rifampicin. Rifampicin will reduce your child's risk of infection. Children under 5 years of age who have not had the Hib vaccine and have been in close contact with a case of Hib Meningitis may need to take Rifampicin.

Your doctor and local health clinic will be able to answer any further questions that you might have about Meningitis.