



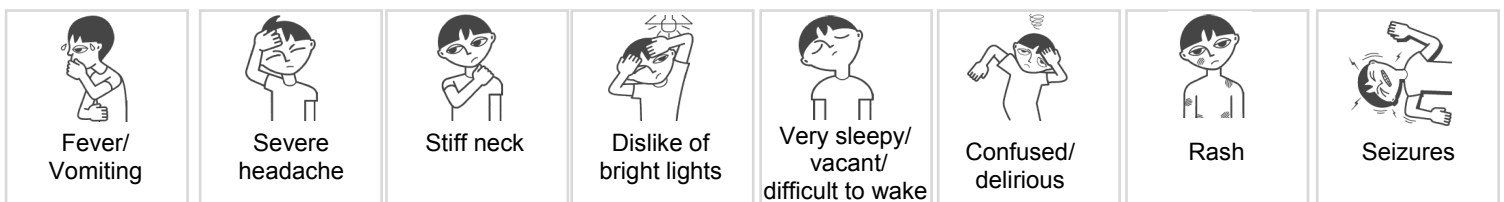
Meningitis, septicaemia and meningococcal disease

Symptoms of meningitis, septicaemia and meningococcal disease can occur in any order.
Not everyone gets all the symptoms.

What is meningitis?

- Meningitis is an infection of the lining of the brain and spinal cord caused by viruses or bacteria:
 - ⇒ Viral meningitis is milder than bacterial meningitis. Most people recover within 5 to 14 days without treatment.
 - ⇒ Bacterial meningitis is less common than viral meningitis but more serious, and needs urgent treatment.
- Meningitis can affect anyone, but is most common in babies, young children and teenagers.
- As early symptoms for both viral and bacterial meningitis can be similar, it is important to contact your GP immediately. If GP is unable to see the patient urgently, go to the nearest Emergency Department.

Symptoms may include:

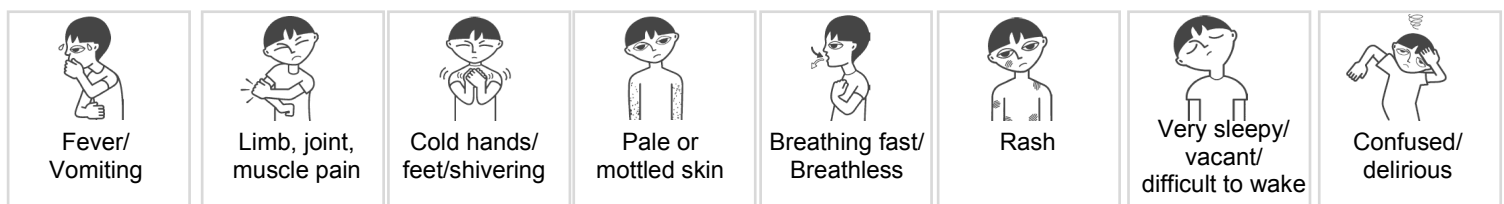


What is septicaemia?

Septicaemia (blood poisoning) is caused when bacteria enter the bloodstream releasing poisons which make you feel unwell and feverish. The bacteria damages the walls of blood vessels, causing blood to leak. This shows up on the skin as a rash which may start as tiny blood spots that look like red pin-prick type marks. These marks do not fade during a glass test and, if untreated, can spread to form bruises or blood blisters. The rash is not the only symptom of septicaemia, so do not wait for it to appear before getting medical help.



Symptoms of septicaemia may include:



The Meningitis Baby Watch picture on page 2 of this leaflet has a full list of symptoms to look out for in babies

What is meningococcal disease?

- Meningococcal disease is a life-threatening bacterial infection. It is a term used to describe two major illnesses, meningitis and septicaemia, which can occur on their own but often occur together.
- It is caused by the *Neisseria meningitides* bacterium.
- There are several strains of this bacterium, including groups A, B, C, W135 and Y. Groups B and C are the strains most common in Ireland.
- It is most common from September to April.

How is bacterial meningitis and meningococcal disease spread?

- These infections do not spread easily from person to person - close and fairly prolonged contact is needed.
- The infections are usually spread by people who are not sick themselves, but who are carrying the germs in the back of their nose or throat. The germs can be coughed out and breathed in, or may be transferred in saliva, for example during prolonged or intimate kissing. They are not spread through water or food.

When are antibiotics needed?

- People diagnosed with bacterial meningitis and meningococcal disease need urgent antibiotic treatment. Antibiotics are also given to their close contacts.
- People diagnosed with viral meningitis will not routinely be given antibiotics and most people recover within 5 to 14 days without any medical treatment. Their close contacts will not need antibiotics.

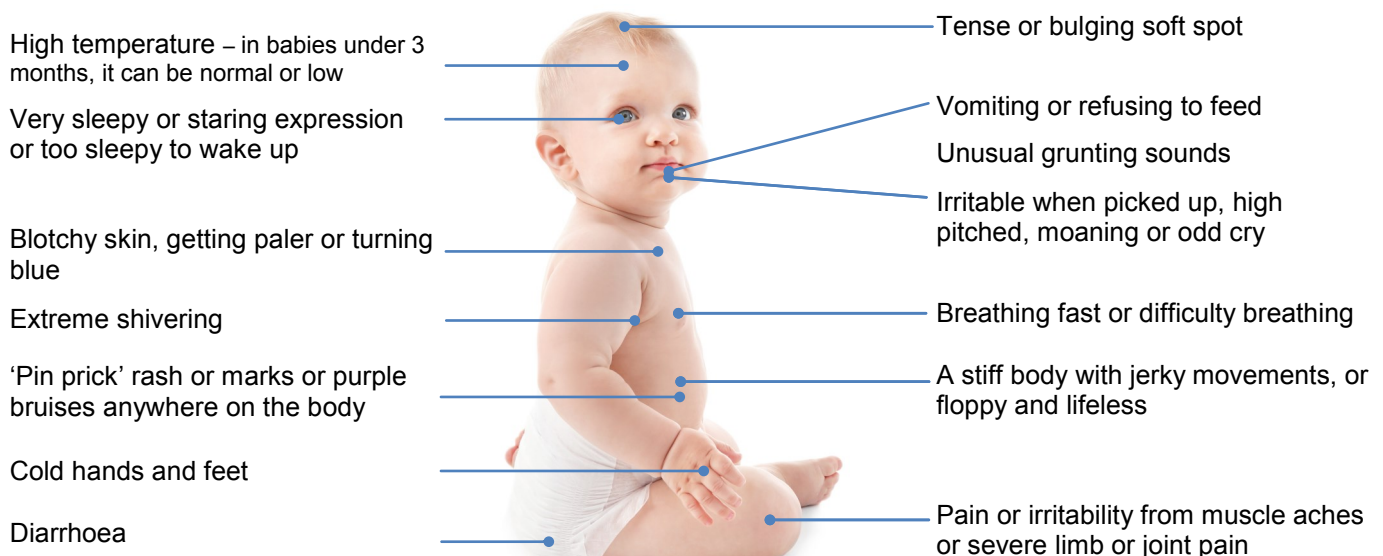
Can bacterial meningitis and meningococcal disease be treated and cured?

- Yes - the earlier the diagnosis, the earlier treatment with antibiotics can begin and therefore the greater chance that the person will make a full recovery.
- Early diagnosis is the key so if you suspect that someone may have meningitis or meningococcal disease seek medical attention immediately.

Vaccination and prevention of meningococcal disease:

- There are several different types of meningococcal bacteria, including groups A, B, C, W135 and Y.
- Vaccines for groups B and C are part of the primary childhood immunisation schedule in Ireland.
 - ⇒ **Group C:** In October 2000 the meningococcal group C conjugate vaccine (MenC) was introduced in Ireland to the infant immunisation schedule and is currently given at 6 months of age. Children also receive a booster at 13 months and as a teenager.
 - ⇒ **Group B:** Meningococcal group B is responsible for 80-85% of meningococcal meningitis and septicaemia cases in Ireland each year. Meningitis B vaccine is now part of the infant immunisation schedule for babies born on or after 1st October 2016. It is given at 2, 4 and 12 months of age.
- The best way to prevent meningitis is to **ensure your child is up to date with all their vaccines.**
- Vaccines do not prevent every kind of meningitis, so if your child has symptoms that suggest meningitis or septicaemia, get medical help urgently.

Meningitis Baby Watch: - Is your baby getting worse fast? - Babies can get ill very quickly, so check often:



Not every baby gets all these symptoms and symptoms can appear in any order.

If you feel "something is wrong", **get medical help quickly.**