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Dear Parent and Carers,

Re: Meningitis outbreak in Kent

Many of you will have seen the tragic news of the death of two young people and several serious cases linked to a meningitis (MenB) outbreak in Kent.

There have been no linked cases in Southampton and there is a low risk of this happening.

We appreciate however that some of you may have concerns and questions. For this reason, I am writing to parents to share some information and links with you that I hope you will find helpful and reassuring.

Meningitis is an uncommon but serious disease. Meningococcal infection does not spread like viruses such as colds and flu; it requires close, direct, or prolonged contact. While meningococcal disease can affect all ages, recent outbreaks have shown that older children, teenagers and young adults, particularly those in shared settings such as schools, colleges and universities, are more likely to be affected.

Most cases of meningococcal disease are unrelated to outbreaks and occur spontaneously linked to the fact that a small proportion of the population carry meningococcal bacteria in their nose and throats without becoming unwell.

It therefore always remains helpful for people to know the main **signs and symptoms of meningococcal disease/meningitis**, outlined in the information below, as rapid recognition and treatment can protect lives.

Kind regards



Dr Debbie Chase
Director of Public Health



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What is meningitis?

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

Meningitis Signs and Symptoms

- Meningococcal **disease can be hard to identify at first** because it can be like a bad case of flu. However, anyone affected with meningococcal disease will usually become **seriously ill within a few hours**.
- You should **keep checking yourself/your child if they are unwell** and **contact your GP (family doctor) or NHS 111 for advice if you have any concerns**.

High temperature	Rapid breathing
Vomiting or diarrhoea and stomach cramps	Joint or muscle pain
	Cold hands and feet
Severe headache	Pale blotchy skin
Stiff neck	Confusion and/or irritability
Dislike of bright light	Drowsiness or difficult to wake
Rash or bruising rash	Seizures or fits

- One or more of these symptoms may develop and they can appear in any order.
- **Remember, a very ill person needs medical help even if there are only a few spots, a rash or no rash at all. [More on what is the meningitis rash](#).**
- **Anyone worried** about their own/their child's condition, particularly if they are getting worse **should seek medical help urgently** at the closest A&E Department or by dialling 999.
- Be watchful and use your instincts. Early treatment can be lifesaving.

Further information and advice on meningococcal disease, is available from:

- The Meningitis Research Foundation, www.meningitis.org telephone: 0808 800 334
- Meningitis Now, www.meningitisnow.org telephone: 0808 80 10 388 helpline email address: helpline@meningitisnow.org
- <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/meningitis/>

[The Healthier Together app](#) is also a great source of information for parents and carers across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight. The app, which can be easily downloaded, provides parents and carers with information to help keep their child safe and healthy, as well as helping them decide what to do when their child is unwell.

This brief has been prepared by Southampton City Council public health team.



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