

Meningitis

Children's Services

What is Meningitis?

Meningitis means inflammation of the meninges - the membrane which covers the brain and spinal cord.

This is usually caused by infection by bacteria or virus. It can be difficult to tell by just looking at the child which of these is causing the infection.

Tests may be needed to confirm Meningitis and whether by virus or bacteria. Bacterial Meningitis is more serious and requires urgent treatment with antibiotics. If left untreated, it could cause damage to the brain or could be fatal.

How is bacterial meningitis spread?

The germs that cause this are common and live naturally in the back of the nose and throat in some people. They can spread between people by coughing, sneezing and kissing. In most cases these bacteria do not cause illness. Rarely, they do, for reasons medicine doesn't understand.

How is meningitis diagnosed?

Tests for Meningitis include:

- **Blood tests:** to check for evidence of infection
- **A lumbar puncture:** taking a sample of spinal fluid from the base of the spine and checking it for infection
- **Sometimes a brain (CT) scan:** to assess the level of pressure on the brain.

How is meningitis treated?

Antibiotics by drip (intravenous) are the main treatment for suspected or proven Bacterial Meningitis. Steroids may also be given at the beginning as these can help reduce any swelling of the brain. If very ill, the child may need more treatment, such as fluids by drip and help with their breathing or circulation. Some children need transfer to a paediatric intensive care unit. If treated early enough most children, make a full recovery.

Depending on the type of Meningitis your child may need an additional antibiotic called Rifampicin for 2-4 days to remove any of the bacteria from their nose or throat.

The prevention of infection is a major priority in all healthcare and everyone has a part to play.

- **Please decontaminate your hands frequently for 20 seconds using soap and water or alcohol gel if available**
- **If you have symptoms of diarrhoea and/or vomiting, cough or other respiratory symptoms, a temperature or any loss of taste or smell please do not visit the hospital or any other care facility and seek advice from 111**
- **Keep the environment clean and tidy**
- **Let's work together to keep infections out of our hospitals and care homes.**

Can anything be done to prevent anyone else getting it?

Only close contacts of someone with meningitis are at slight increased risk themselves. This is usually only those living in the same house. The city's Public Health Department advises who might be at risk. Such people may be offered Rifampicin treatment as a precaution (different treatment if the adult is pregnant).

Vaccines are able to prevent most forms of Bacterial Meningitis, so the best way to protect you and your family is to ensure everyone is up to date with their vaccinations.

What are the possible complications of Meningitis?

Some 15-25% of children may develop complications following Bacterial Meningitis. These vary in severity and duration; some lasting few weeks or months, others being permanent.

The chance of complications and their severity is usually related to the severity of the initial illness.

Possible complications include:

- Hearing loss (this may be partial or total)
- Problems with memory and concentration
- Problems with coordination and balance
- Learning difficulties
- Epilepsy
- Speech problems
- Cerebral palsy
- Problems with vision.

But, most children make a complete recovery. All children who have had Meningitis will have a hearing check, usually within 4 weeks of going home. They will also be seen in clinic to assess their progress.

There may be temporary upset in your child after you go home, such as anxiety, clinginess and disturbed sleep. If these don't settle, please discuss them with your hospital doctor in clinic or your GP or your Health Visitor.

Remember...

Being fully vaccinated is best protection against Meningitis for you and your family.

For further information

The Meningitis Research Foundation provides a 24-hour Freephone helpline: 080 8800 3344
www.meningitis.org

English

If you need information in another way like easy read or a different language please let us know.

If you need an interpreter or assistance please let us know.

Lithuanian

Jeigu norėtumėte, kad informacija jums būtų pateikta kitu būdu, pavyzdžiui, supaprastinta forma ar kita kalba, prašome mums apie tai pranešti.

Jeigu jums reikia vertėjo ar kitos pagalbos, prašome mums apie tai pranešti.

Polish

Jeżeli chcieliby Państwo otrzymać te informacje w innej postaci, na przykład w wersji łatwej do czytania lub w innym języku, prosimy powiedzieć nam o tym.

Prosimy poinformować nas również, jeżeli potrzebowaliby Państwo usługi tłumaczenia ustnego lub innej pomocy.

Punjabi

ਜੇ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਰੂਪ ਵਿਚ, ਜਿਵੇਂ ਪੜ੍ਹਨ ਵਿਚ ਆਸਾਨ ਰੂਪ ਜਾਂ ਕਿਸੇ ਦੂਜੀ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ, ਚਾਹੀਦੀ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਦੱਸੋ।

ਜੇ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਦੁਭਾਸ਼ੀਏ ਦੀ ਜਾਂ ਸਹਾਇਤਾ ਦੀ ਲੋੜ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਦੱਸੋ।

Romanian

Dacă aveți nevoie de informații în alt format, ca de exemplu caractere ușor de citit sau altă limbă, vă rugăm să ne informați.

Dacă aveți nevoie de un interpret sau de asistență, vă rugăm să ne informați.

Traditional Chinese

如果您需要以其他方式了解信息，如易读或其他语种，请告诉我们。

如果您需要口译人员或帮助，请告诉我们。