

IS IT INFECTIOUS?

Bacterial meningitis is spread in droplets from the back of the nose and throat during coughing, sneezing and mouth to mouth kissing. As these bacteria die very quickly outside the body close, prolonged contact is required to transmit them to another person.

Close (household and kissing) contacts of a person with some types of bacterial meningitis are treated with a short course of antibiotics. There is usually no need to treat contacts outside the home, i.e. work or school contacts.

WHAT IS THE INCUBATION PERIOD?

The time taken from contact with the germ until the illness starts is between 2 and 10 days depending on the type of meningitis.

HOW SOON CAN THE PERSON RETURN TO WORK/THE CARE SETTING?

As soon as the person is fully recovered.

This leaflet gives general advice. For further information please ask either the nursing or medical staff who are providing your care and treatment or contact the Infection Prevention and Control Team on 01386 502552.

If you would like this leaflet in a different language, larger print size, in audio, Braille or any other format please contact the

PALS team by phone on

☎ 01905 760020;

by letter ✉ Communications,
Worcestershire Health and Care Trust,
2 Kings Court, Charles Hasting Way,
Worcester. WR5 1JR.

or by email 📧:

WHCNHS.communications@nhs.net



**Worcestershire
Health and Care**
NHS Trust



MENINGITIS

What is it?

Your questions answered

**An Information Leaflet
for
Patients and Staff**

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS?

Early signs and symptoms of meningitis may be non specific although there is usually a combination of the following symptoms

BABIES AND TODDLERS — EARLY SYMPTOMS

- Fever
- Drowsiness
- Refusing feeds/vomiting or diarrhoea
- Fretfulness/irritable or distressed on handling
- Neck stiffness
- Rash of tiny red-purple Spots anywhere on body

BABIES AND TODDLERS — LATE SYMPTOMS

- Child is difficult to wake
- High-pitched moaning cry
- Shocked – pale or blotchy skin, ‘clammy’
- Widespread red-purple rash, which does not become pale on pressure
- Unrousable, ie Coma

OLDER CHILDREN AND ADULTS — EARLY SYMPTOMS

- Fever
- Vomiting
- Back or joint pains
- Headache
- Neck stiffness
- Photophobia – patient finds light painful and avoids it
- Confusion
- Red-purple rash anywhere on the body that does not go pale under pressure

OLDER CHILDREN AND ADULTS — LATE SYMPTOMS

- Unrousable, i.e. coma
- Pale/clammy, i.e. shocked
- Widespread red-purple rash

WHAT IS IT?

Meningitis is inflammation of the meninges, the membrane covering the brain and spinal cord. It can be caused by a number of different viruses and bacteria. Without hospital tests it is not possible to identify the type of germ.

CAN IT BE SERIOUS?

Yes. Most cases of meningitis are caused by viruses. These are generally milder and people recover without treatment. However bacterial meningitis can be fatal or can lead to problems such as deafness. It is very important therefore that anyone with the symptoms of meningitis is seen urgently by a doctor as early diagnosis and treatment can save lives.

IS IT TREATABLE?

Bacterial meningitis must be treated urgently with antibiotics in hospital.

CAN MENINGITIS BE PREVENTED?

Some types can be. Hib meningitis once the most common type of meningitis in the under 5s can now be prevented by a vaccine given at 2, 3 and 4 months of age. There is also a vaccine against some types of meningococcal meningitis. Antibiotics may be given to household contacts to help to prevent meningitis.

