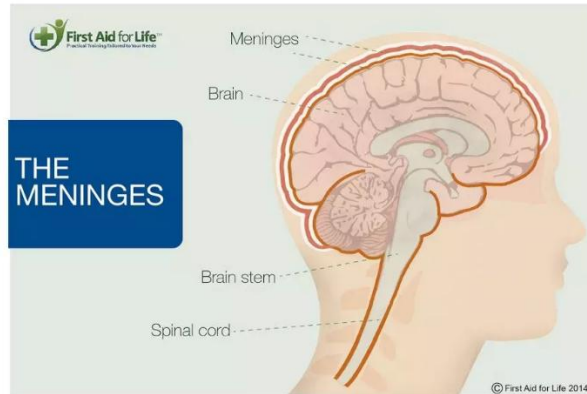


Meningitis

by [Emma Hammett](#) | [Uncategorized](#)

Meningitis is swelling of the meninges (the protective membranes of the brain and spinal cord). The inflammation is usually the result of an infection.



Causes

Meningitis can be caused by viruses or bacteria. It is often caused by a bacteria which can live harmlessly in people's throats but can cause serious illness if it gets into the blood or spinal fluid. There are different types of this bacteria and the most common is known as type B – what is often referred to as meningitis B, or MenB.

According to Meningitis Now, MenB is one of the most common causes of meningitis in the UK. While **Viral** meningitis can be very unpleasant, it is rarely life threatening, and most people eventually make a full recovery.

However **Bacterial** meningitis is more serious and often life-changing or fatal.

Recognising **meningitis can be hard at first as early symptoms are similar to flu and other common illnesses.**

Symptoms

Symptoms can develop suddenly and can include:

- Sudden onset of high fever
- Severe and worsening headache
- Stiff neck
- Vomiting and diarrhoea
- Joint and muscle pain
- Dislike of bright lights
- Very cold hands and feet
- Seizures
- Confusion/delirium/brain fog
- Extreme sleepiness/difficulty waking
- Fever – particularly with cold hands and feet, a headache and feeling generally unwell
- Floppy, lifeless and drowsy
- A rash. This may not appear and is usually a late sign, but if someone is unwell and you see a rash which does not disappear when pressure is applied to it (the tumbler test) **call an [ambulance](#) immediately.**

These [symptoms](#) can appear in any order and some may not appear at all.

Bacterial Meningitis can often progress to sepsis when the infection ends up in the bloodstream. This can make someone extremely unwell, very fast. It can lead to brain damage, amputations, life-changing injury and can kill them.

Meningitis can kill in as little as 4 hours.

Common signs and symptoms of meningitis and sepsis.
Symptoms can appear in any order. Some may not appear at all.



Symptoms in Toddlers and Babies

Young children are at the most risk for meningitis. Here are some symptoms specific to toddlers and babies:

- Pale, mottled skin
- Cold hands and feet
- Refusing to eat/ feed
- Irritable, not wanting to be held/ touched
- Body going stiff and making jerky movements, or becoming floppy and unable to stand up
- A tense or bulging soft spot on the head (fontanelle)
- High pitched moaning

What to do if you think you or some else may have meningitis

- Anyone becoming unwell with symptoms of meningitis and septicaemia should seek medical help urgently at the closest Accident and Emergency Department or by dialling 999.
- Early treatment can be lifesaving. Trust your instincts.

Meningitis rash and the tumbler test

Most rashes disappear when you apply pressure to the skin. However, with [meningitis](#), the rash behaves differently and remains visible when you press a clear glass tumbler over the skin (known as the tumbler test). Do not wait for a rash to appear as symptoms can appear in any order and some may not appear at all.

It can be harder to see a rash on dark skin. So be sure to check the soles of the feet, palms of hands, roof of mouth and inside eyelids.

When to call an ambulance

- the casualty is getting worse and you are seriously concerned
- they have a rash you are still able to see when you apply pressure with the side of a glass.
- someone is seriously unwell and has some of the above symptoms
- failure to pass urine in 12 hours

Otherwise, call your GP. If you cannot get to talk to the doctor immediately, get the casualty to hospital.