

Meningitis and sepsis

Not common but serious

A classic symptom of meningitis is a blotchy rash that doesn't fade when a glass is rolled over it, but this doesn't appear in many cases.

Meningitis can strike quickly and kill within hours. Make sure you know the signs and symptoms and seek urgent medical help if concerned. Trust your instincts and don't wait until a rash develops, see the symptoms box.

Meningitis is a swelling around the brain. It is a very serious, contagious illness, but if it is treated early most children make a full recovery.

Sepsis (often called septicaemia or blood poisoning) is a life-threatening condition triggered by an infection. The skin may also develop pinpoint bruises or large purple areas, which do not change colour if you roll a glass tumbler over them. This is a common sign of meningococcal septicaemia, a type of blood poisoning caused by the meningococcus bacteria, which can also cause meningitis.

You should always treat any case of suspected meningitis or septicaemia as an emergency.

Early signs may be like having a cold or flu. Children with meningitis can become seriously ill very fast, so make sure you can spot the signs. Your child may have a cluster of red or purple spots. Do the glass test. This rash can be harder to see on darker skin, so check for spots over your child's whole body as it can start anywhere (check lightest areas first).

However, the rash is not always present - be aware of all the signs/symptoms.

The presence of fever and any other of the listed symptoms should be taken extremely seriously.

Download the FREE meningitis symptoms app from Meningitis Now

Other symptoms of meningitis

Other symptoms of meningitis

Meningitis can have a number of other symptoms, not just a blotchy rash, including:

- A high temperature (fever) over **38C (100.4F)**.
- Feeling and being sick.
- Irritability and a lack of energy.
- A headache.
- Aching muscles and joints.
- Breathing quickly.
- Cold hands and feet.

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- Pale, mottled skin.
- A stiff neck.
- Confusion.
- A dislike of bright lights.
- Drowsiness.
- Fits (seizures).

The glass test

The glass test is a really useful way of spotting suspected meningitis. If your child has a cluster of red or purple spots, press the side of a clear drinking glass firmly against the rash.

Go straight to the Accident and Emergency Department

In this example the spots are still visible through the glass. This is called a **non-blanching rash** - it does not fade. Contact a doctor immediately (e.g. your own surgery or Walk-in/ Urgent Care Centre). If you cannot get help straight away **go to A&E**.

In this example the spots under the glass have virtually disappeared. It is unlikely to be meningitis but if you are still worried call **NHS 111**, contact your GP or **go to A&E**.

Find out more from www.meningitisnow.org