



Meningitis Awareness: Children

Although meningitis is quite uncommon in children, it is very important to act quickly should you be concerned that your child is displaying any of the signs and symptoms of meningitis.

The below link to the Meningitis Research Foundation Website contains information of the **RED** and **AMBER** Symptoms of meningitis in children along with providing more detailed information:

<https://www.meningitis.org/meningitis/safety-netting-resources-hub>

If you are at all concerned that you are displaying symptoms of meningitis, you should **act without delay and seek medical help immediately**. If this is out of hours, given that early detection is so critical we recommend contacting NHS 111 or attending Accident & Emergency.

Symptoms across different age groups

Meningitis presents differently in adults and children of different ages. It is important to know the different signs and symptoms so immediate action can be taken when necessary.

Babies under 8 weeks old

If you suspect that your baby may have meningitis then you should seek medical help without delay.

Regardless of whether your baby has a fever, if they are displaying a combination of any of the following signs and symptoms then you should seek urgent medical attention:

- High temperature. It is however important to note that in babies that are under 3 months old, their temperature may be either normal or low, so do not rely on this symptom alone when assessing whether your baby has meningitis
- A persistent refusal to feed
- Lethargy or excessively sleepy
- Irritability
- A stiff or floppy body
- A weak, high pitched or continuous cry
- Grunting
- A soft spot on their head which is bulging

Babies 8 weeks and above

In addition to the above listed symptoms, if an older baby displays the following signs and symptoms then **you should act immediately**:

- High temperature. It is however important to note that in babies that are under 3 months old, their temperature may be either normal or low, so do not rely on this symptom alone when assessing whether your baby has meningitis.
- Tense or bulging soft spot on the baby's head
- Very sleepy / staring expression / too sleepy to wake up
- Breathing fast / difficulty breathing
- Extreme shivering
- 'Pin prick' rash / marks or purple bruises anywhere on the body
- Sometimes diarrhoea
- Unusual grunting sounds
- Vomiting / refusing to feed
- Irritable when picking up, with a high pitched or moaning cry
- Blotchy skin, getting paler or turning blue
- A stiff body with jerky movements or else floppy and lifeless
- Pain / irritability from muscle aches or severe limb / joint pain
- Cold hands and feet

Further information

More information can be found on the Meningitis Research Foundation website here: <https://www.meningitis.org/>

Toddlers

If you suspect that your toddler may have meningitis then you should seek medical help without delay.

- Fever and/or Vomiting
- Severe headache
- Rash (anywhere on the body)
- Stiff neck (less common in young children)
- Dislike of bright lights (less common in young children)
- Very sleepy /vacant /difficult to wake
- Confused /delirious
- Seizures (fits) may also be seen

Young adults

If you suspect that your child may have meningitis then you should seek medical help without delay.

- Fever and / or vomiting
- Severe headache
- Limb, joint and muscle pain
- Cold hands and feet, shivering
- Pale
- Breathing fast, breathless
- Rash
- Stiff neck
- Dislike of bright lights
- Very sleepy, difficult to wake, vacant
- Confused, delirious
- Seizures (fits)