



Meningitis Awareness: Signs and Symptoms

This fact sheet covers the signs and symptoms of meningitis in adults. For more information regarding meningitis and children & young adults, please see the Meningitis in Children Fact Sheet.

Importance of acting quickly

Meningitis can spread rapidly and it can kill in hours. 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.

Key signs and symptoms

There are many signs and symptoms of meningitis to look out for. Many of which are similar to those symptoms you experience if you are suffering from a common cold.

It is vitally important to be aware of the symptoms so that they are not missed at the earliest opportunity.

Initial symptoms

Generally, people with meningitis will start to display the following symptoms:

- Headache
- Vomiting
- Fever
- General feeling of malaise
- Limb pain
- Pale skin
- Cold hands and feet

Not all of the above symptoms need to be present.

Further symptoms

Further symptoms which may occur when the virus is at a more developed stage (approximately 8 hours in adults) include:

- Rash: The rash can appear anywhere on your body. It is however important to be aware that a rash does not always appear in people who have meningitis.

If a rash is present, it can appear differently for different people so it is important to look out for pin-prick red or purple spots or bruising presenting as red/purple areas on the skin.

Also see “Tumbler Test” below.

- Stiffness in the neck (this is less common in children with meningitis)
- Unable to tolerate bright lights or sunlight (this is less common in children with meningitis)
- Feeling of confusion
- Seizures

The Tumbler Test

If a rash develops then the “Tumbler Test” can assist in showing whether it may be meningitis.

If when pressing a clear glass over the rash you can still see the rash clearly through the glass, you must seek immediate medical assistance.



Check your symptoms:

This is only a summary of symptoms and we would always advise you to check your symptoms using the below link on the Meningitis Research Foundation's website or to contact a health care/medical professional if you are concerned:

<https://www.meningitis.org/meningitis/check-symptoms>

