

Overview

Meningitis and septicaemia

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Meningitis is an infection of the lining of the brain and spinal cord. It's a very serious illness. Anyone can get it.

It can cause serious brain problems and can lead to death if it is not treated quickly.

Meningitis is usually caused by a bacterial or viral infection. The germs that cause bacterial meningitis can also cause septicaemia (blood poisoning) and a rash. Bacterial meningitis and septicaemia are life threatening infections.

Vaccines can offer some protection against meningitis.

People most at risk

Anyone can get meningitis.

But it's more common in:

- babies and young children
- teenagers and young adults
- elderly people
- people with a weak immune system - for example, those with HIV and those having chemotherapy

Get help now

Fast treatment can save lives and prevent long-term disability.

Call 112 or 999 for an ambulance immediately if:

Call 112 or 999 for an ambulance immediately if:

- you think you or your child are seriously ill

Or go to your nearest emergency department (ED) or ED for children.

Trust your instincts.

 [Find your nearest hospital ED](#)

Contact a GP or GP Out of Hours Service urgently if:

- you're not sure if your child is seriously ill

 [Find a GP](#)

 [Find a GP out of hours](#)

Bring your child to the nearest hospital ED for children if:

- a GP or GP out of hours is not able to see your child urgently
- you're unable to contact a GP

 [Find your nearest hospital ED](#)

Some EDs in Dublin only see adults and some only see children. Outside of Dublin, children can go to any ED.

Vaccines to protect against meningitis

Meningitis can be caused by a number of different infections. You and your child can get several vaccinations that offer some protection.

Your child will get most vaccinations as part of their [vaccination schedule](#).

Contact your GP to check if you or your child's vaccinations are up-to-date.

Read more about [vaccines for you and your family](#)

HSE Live - we're here to help

Monday to Friday: 8am to 8pm

Saturday: 9am to 5pm

Sunday: Closed

Bank holidays: Closed

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