



St. Edmund's Church of England Primary School
Fawkham Road, West Kingsdown, Sevenoaks, Kent, TN15 6JP
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Re: Meningococcal disease outbreak

Dear Parents/Carers

I am writing to you with information from the Department for Education regarding the meningococcal disease outbreak in Kent.

Meningococcal disease (meningitis and septicaemia) is an uncommon but serious disease caused by meningococcal bacteria. The onset of illness is often sudden and early diagnosis and treatment with antibiotics are vital. Meningococcal infection doesn't spread very easily. The bacteria can only be passed to others after a long period of close contact, for example living with someone in shared accommodation, through prolonged kissing or sharing vapes.

People may be offered preventive antibiotics if they have had significant, close contact with someone with meningococcal disease in the last 7 days.

UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) is leading a multi-agency management team to respond to this outbreak. Specialists at UKHSA are interviewing affected individuals and their families to help identify all close contacts and arrange antibiotics to limit spread.

Investigations have confirmed some of the cases visited Club Chemistry in Canterbury between 5th to 7th March prior to becoming unwell. UKHSA is working closely with the nightclub and partners including the University of Kent to limit the spread. UKHSA is now advising anyone who visited Club Chemistry on 5th March, 6th March or 7th March to come forward for post exposure preventative antibiotic treatment as a precautionary measure.

There are two important actions that all students and parents can take to support management of this incident and help protect themselves. These are:

1. Be aware and alert to the signs and symptoms of invasive meningococcal disease.
2. Encourage uptake of preventive antibiotic treatment for those who are eligible.

Signs and symptoms

Meningococcal disease can progress rapidly, so it's essential that parents and students are alert to the signs and symptoms of meningococcal meningitis and septicaemia. You should seek urgent medical help if you or your child develop any symptoms of meningococcal disease.

- a rash that doesn't fade when pressed with a glass
- 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
- extreme sleepiness/difficulty waking

Meningococcal disease does not spread easily, and outbreaks of this size are rare. If you have not been contacted directly by UKHSA the risk to you/your child is low. You or your child can continue to

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attend school or college as normal unless you have been directly advised otherwise by your local health protection team.

There are several types of meningococcal bacteria that can cause meningitis. The current outbreak is caused by Meningococcal B (MenB).

Teenagers are routinely offered the MenACWY vaccine, which protects against four other types of meningitis: A, C, W, and Y. This usually happens in school Years 9 and 10. If someone missed this vaccination at school, they can still get it up until their 25th birthday. It's especially important to get it before starting university or college, where infections can spread more easily. You can get it by contacting your GP.

However, the MenACWY vaccine does not protect against MenB, and there is no routine MenB vaccination programme for young adults. MenB vaccination is only routinely offered to children under two, meaning children born before 2015 (when this programme was introduced) have not been vaccinated as part of their routine immunisation schedule. Because of this, it's important to know the signs and symptoms of meningitis and septicaemia—spotting them early can save lives.

Finally, make sure that children stay up to date with all their routine vaccinations, as these offer important protection.

In some outbreaks, vaccination against meningococcal group B (MenB) is used as an additional protective measure, particularly when there is evidence that vaccination can reduce the risk of late cases in affected groups. UKHSA continues to review all information to identify and assess appropriate prevention and control action. If vaccination becomes recommended as part of the response, parents will be informed immediately with clear instructions on who is eligible, when clinics will run, and what steps to take.

The most important steps to take at this stage are to be alert to the signs and symptoms of invasive meningococcal disease and encourage uptake of antibiotic treatment to those who are eligible.

For more information, visit the NHS website <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/meningitis/> or see the information available from two charities who offer free support via their websites and helplines:

The Meningitis Research Foundation
www.meningitis.org
Helpline UK 080 8800 3344

Meningitis Now
www.meningitisnow.org

Helpline 0808 80 10 388
or helpline@meningitisnow.org

Best wishes
Mrs Stoneham
Head of School

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