

23 March 2026

Dear Parents, Carers and Guardians,

**Re: meningitis outbreak in Kent**

Understandably, you may be worried about the news of an outbreak of meningitis in Kent. There have been 20 cases of meningitis among young people in the Kent area and sadly there have been two deaths.

There are no confirmed cases of meningitis in Haringey linked to this outbreak.

**What is meningitis and how does it spread?**

Meningitis is when the protective lining around the brain becomes swollen, and this can be caused by many different infections. One of the infections that can cause meningitis is meningococcal bacteria. Sometimes, these infections can also enter the blood, causing blood poisoning (sepsis), which is life-threatening.

Meningitis does not spread as easily as some other infections such as measles or COVID-19. It is usually spread by people who carry it in their nose or throat but are not ill themselves. It can also be spread by someone with meningitis, although this is less common. It can only be passed to others after a long period of close contact, for example living with someone in shared accommodation, through kissing or sharing vapes.

**Signs, symptoms and what you should do?**

Meningitis can worsen quickly. The most important thing you can do is know the symptoms and act quickly if they appear.

Symptoms to look out for include:

- a rash or spots on the skin that do not fade when pressed with a glass
- a high temperature and feels abnormally cold to touch/very cold hands and feet
- very fast breathing, finding it much harder to breathe than normal
- severe and worsening headache
- stiff neck, especially when trying to look up and down
- vomiting and diarrhoea (bloody or black 'coffee ground' sick)

- dislike of bright lights
- seizures (fits)
- confusion
- extreme sleepiness, floppiness or difficulty waking
- Very pale skin and skin, lips or tongue may look blue

If you or someone you look after develops these symptoms, see medical help urgently by going to your nearest A&E or calling 999. Trust your instincts; if your child is ill and getting worse, don't be afraid to seek medical help immediately. You can also contact your GP or NHS 111 if you are unsure or worried.

If your child or anyone else you are looking after goes to bed unwell, check on them regularly as early treatment can be lifesaving.

### **How can meningitis be prevented?**

Some people may be asked to take preventive antibiotics if they have had a long period of close contact with someone with meningitis in the last 7 days. You would be contacted directly by the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) Health Protection Team if you or anyone you care for needed antibiotics.

Several of the routine NHS vaccinations offered to children and adults can reduce the risk of getting meningitis. Families should therefore continue to come forward as standard for their routine vaccinations.

### **What actions you should take?**

- You should continue to attend nursery/school and other activities as normal and do not need to take any action unless you are individually contacted by the UKHSA Health Protection Team.
- Knows the signs and symptoms of Meningococcal disease and knows how to protect yourselves and others. <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/meningitis/>
- Check you and your family members are up to date with all routine vaccinations. You can do this by checking your child's red book or speaking with your GP.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding the content in this letter, please contact us.

Yours Sincerely,



Dr Will Maimaris, Director of Public Health