

Kent Meningitis Outbreak - A message from NHS Surrey

We are extremely sad to hear of the meningitis outbreak in Canterbury and subsequent deaths. Along with partners, we are monitoring the situation closely. Please check the [UK Health and Security Agency \(UKHSA\) website](#) for updates as well as our own website.

Below is an FAQ which sets out the key information Surrey residents need to know now. This is based on national guidance, but if this changes we will let you know.

Has there been a meningitis outbreak in Surrey?

No. A number of meningococcal (meningitis) cases have recently been confirmed in the Canterbury area of Kent, mostly involving young people connected to the University and nearby venues. There is no evidence yet of wider spread outside of Kent and public health teams are taking precautionary action to reduce any further risk.

Who is eligible for preventative antibiotics?

As such, following current national guidance, preventative antibiotics are only being offered to eligible contacts who are:

- All students who live on Canterbury campus
- All staff who live or work in affected Halls of Residence
- Anyone who attended Club Chemistry on 5th, 6th and 7th March
- Close contacts who have been identified by UKHSA

Therefore, if someone has returned home to Surrey from Kent and meets any of the above criteria, they are eligible for antibiotics and should contact their local GP to obtain a one-off dose.

Can a child or adult be vaccinated now?

Vaccinations for meningitis are only offered at specific ages as part of the NHS routine vaccination schedule. A record of this will be in your child's Red Book or via your NHS App.

Please note these vaccines do not protect against every strain of meningitis, so it's still important to know the symptoms and seek urgent help if they appear.

- **MenB:**

Given at 8 weeks, 12 weeks and 1 year, with catch-up available only up to age 2.

The NHS currently offers MenB vaccination only as part of the routine infant schedule and no catch-up programme is commissioned for older children or adults.

- **MenACWY:**

Given in school Year 9, with catch-up available up to age 25.

If you think a MenACWY catch-up vaccination is required, there is a schedule of local [community clinics](#) where this can be done.

What do I do if I am in a vulnerable group?

If you are not a close contact, there is nothing specific that you need to do. You do not need antibiotics, and you can go to work/school or other usual activities as normal.

What are the symptoms of meningitis?

Symptoms can develop quickly and may include:

- 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

Symptoms can appear in any order, and some may not appear at all. Do not wait for a rash to appear. If someone is ill and getting worse, trust your instincts and get immediate medical help.

More information about meningitis is available on [the NHS website](#).