



11 April 2018

IMPORTANT: MENINGOCOCCAL DISEASE INFORMATION

Dear Parent or Guardian

HSC is currently dealing with a **suspected** case in a 16 year old school boy which occurred outside of school time during the Easter holidays.

The chances of infection are **very** low and all those considered to be at potential risk have been traced and treated as a precaution with prophylactic antibiotics. It would be wrong to treat a broader range of people with prophylactic antibiotics as potential risk is considered to be those in very close contact i.e. sleeping overnight in the same place. This is in line with UK National Guidelines.

Information regarding the signs and symptoms is detailed below.

If you have any concerns about your child or wish to check whether their vaccinations are up to date you should, in the first instance, contact your GP.

If you would like further information or reassurance please contact your child's school.

There is no reason to make any change in the school routine and no reason for children to be kept at home.

How the disease spreads

Meningococcal disease is not very infectious and it very rarely spreads from child to child within a school. The bacteria that cause the illness live naturally in the back of the throat and can spread between people in droplets from the mouth and nose. Many people carry the bacteria in their throats without becoming unwell.

Preventing the spread of meningococcal disease

The most effective way to stop the disease spreading is by giving antibiotics to the very close family contacts of the patient with the illness. That usually means that only people who live in the same house as the sick child need treatment. School contacts are only very rarely at a higher risk and therefore do not normally need antibiotics or investigation. The people who need treatment have already been identified and have received antibiotics.

Symptoms of meningococcal meningitis/blood poisoning

The risk of another case in the school is very small, but it is sensible to be aware of the main signs and symptoms, which are outlined below. The bacteria can cause either meningitis (inflammation of the lining of the brain) or septicaemia (blood poisoning) or both. This disease can be serious.

Some signs and symptoms of meningococcal disease

High temperature	Rapid breathing
Vomiting/ diarrhoea and stomach cramps	Joint or muscle pain
	Cold hands and feet
Severe headache	Abnormal skin colour
Stiff neck	Rash/ Bruising rash
Dislike of bright light	Drowsiness or confusion

Not everyone will develop these symptoms and they can appear in any order. Meningococcal disease can be hard to identify at first because it can be like a bad case of flu. However, anyone affected will usually become seriously ill within a few hours and you should contact your GP (family doctor) or call the hospital on 725241 urgently to seek advice if you have any concerns. BE WATCHFUL and use your instincts. Early treatment can be life-saving.

Protecting against meningococcal disease

It is important to be aware that meningococcal disease is caused by different groups of meningococcal bacteria. In the UK disease is almost always caused by one of four meningococcal groups commonly known as MenB, MenC, MenW or MenY. Some groups of meningococcal disease can be prevented with vaccines. The following meningococcal vaccines are offered as part of the routine schedule in Guernsey:

- Men B vaccine (which protects against most meningococcal group B disease), routinely offered as three doses given as part of the infant immunisation programme

- Men C vaccine (which protects against meningococcal group C disease), routinely offered at 12-13 months as part of the routine childhood immunisation programme
- Men ACWY vaccine (which protects against meningococcal groups A, C, W and Y) routinely offered at around 13/14 years of age
- MenACWY vaccine is also available for new university entrants (<25 years) who have not previously received MenACWY vaccine

Please ensure your child is up to date with their routine vaccinations via your GP. Be watchful for signs and symptoms even if your child is up to date with their vaccinations as available vaccines do not protect against all forms of the disease.

If you need further support or advice, please contact Dr Nicola Brink (Director of Public Health) or Mrs Kay Bull, Lead Infection, Prevention and Control Nurse) through the PEH switchboard.

Dr Nicola Brink
Director of Public Health