

To: Parents and Carers

Date: 20 March 2026

Re: Meningitis outbreak in Kent

Understandably, you may be worried about the news of an outbreak of meningitis in Kent. This is affecting young people in the area and sadly there have been two deaths.

There are no confirmed cases of Meningitis in Essex linked to the Kent outbreak. Although this is a serious disease it is uncommon and the chance of it spreading to Essex is low.

Meningitis is usually caused by a bacterial or viral infection. Bacterial meningitis is rarer but more serious than viral meningitis. Infections that cause meningitis can be spread through, sneezing, coughing, and kissing. Close and prolonged contact is needed to pass the bacteria to others.

Meningitis is usually caught from people who carry these viruses or bacteria in their nose or throat; they may not be ill themselves.

Essex County Council would like to reassure you the situation is being monitored closely. We are working with NHS partners and following UK Health Security Agency advice and guidance.

The most important action you can take to protect yourself and children is to **know the symptoms of meningitis**. It is important to act quickly as symptoms can develop suddenly and can include:

- a high temperature (fever)
- being sick
- a headache
- a rash that does not fade when a glass is rolled over it (but a rash will not always develop)

- a stiff neck
- a dislike of bright lights
- drowsiness or unresponsiveness
- seizures (fits)

These symptoms can appear in any order. You do not always get all the symptoms. Call NHS 111 for advice if you are not sure if it is anything serious or you think you may have been exposed to someone with meningitis.

Trust your instincts and do not wait for all the symptoms to appear or until a rash develops. Someone with meningitis or sepsis can get a lot worse very quickly. Call 999 for an ambulance or go to your nearest A&E immediately if you think you or someone you look after could have meningitis or sepsis.

Vaccinations against meningitis

Vaccinations offer some protection against certain causes of meningitis. You can help protect your child by **taking up routine vaccinations** when they are offered. These include the:

- MenB vaccine – offered to babies aged 8 weeks, followed by a second dose at 12 weeks and a booster at 1 year
- MenACWY vaccine – offered to teenagers, sixth formers and "fresher" students going to university for the first time
- 6-in-1 vaccine – offered to children at 8 weeks, 12 weeks, 16 weeks, and 18 months
- pneumococcal vaccine – 2 doses offered to babies at 16 weeks and 1 year, and a single dose offered to adults aged 65 or over
- MMRV vaccine – offered to children at 12 months and 18 months

It is never too late to catch up, just speak to your GP surgery if any of these vaccinations have been missed.

Further information on meningococcal meningitis and septicaemia:

[Meningitis - NHS](#)

[Symptoms of sepsis - NHS](#)

Yours Sincerely,



Sarah Muckle

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Wellbeing, Public Health and communities

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