

Meningitis & sepsis

Not common but serious

Babies and toddlers are most vulnerable as they cannot easily fight infection because their immune system is not yet fully developed. They can't tell you how they are feeling and can get a lot worse very quickly. Keep checking them.

Meningitis is a swelling around the brain. It is a very serious, contagious illness, but if it is treated early most children make a full recovery.

Sepsis (often called septicaemia or blood poisoning) is a life threatening condition triggered by an infection. The skin may also develop pinprick bruises or large purple areas, which do not change colour if you roll a glass tumbler over them. This is a common sign of meningococcal septicaemia, a type of blood poisoning caused by the meningococcus bacteria, which can also cause meningitis.

You should always treat any case of suspected meningitis or septicaemia as an emergency.

Early signs may be like having a cold or flu. Children with meningitis can become seriously ill very fast, so make sure you can spot the signs. Your child may have a cluster of red or purple spots. Do the glass test. This rash can be harder to see on darker skin, so check for spots over your baby or child's whole body as it can start anywhere (check lightest areas first).

However, the rash is not always present - be aware of all the signs/symptoms.

The presence of fever and any other of the above symptoms should be taken extremely seriously. Not all children will show all the signs listed.

GP says

If any of the signs below are present contact a doctor.

- Fever, cold hands and feet
- Floppy and unresponsive
- Drowsy and difficult to wake
- Spots/rash. Do the glass test
- Rapid breathing or grunting
- Fretful, dislikes being handled
- Unusual cry or moaning

The glass test

If you press the side of a clear glass firmly against the skin and the rash does not fade, it is a sign of meningococcal septicaemia.

If the spots are still visible through the glass. This is called a **non-blanching rash** - it does not fade. Contact a doctor immediately (e.g. your own surgery or Walk-in/Urgent Care Centre). If you cannot get help straight away **go to A&E**.

If the spots under the glass have virtually disappeared. It is unlikely to be meningitis but if you are still worried call **NHS 111**, contact your GP or **go to A&E**.

Find out more from www.meningitisnow.org