



UK Health  
Security  
Agency

**NHS**

A guide to the Meningococcal B vaccine  
**that protects against**  
**meningitis and**  
**septicaemia**



**Meningococcal disease is rare but very serious and requires urgent hospital treatment. It can lead to life-changing disabilities such as amputations, hearing loss, brain damage and scars. It is caused by meningococcal bacteria which are divided into several groups.**

**This vaccine will help to prevent cases of meningitis and septicaemia caused by most strains of the meningococcal B bacteria.**



## What is Bexsero?

Bexsero is a vaccine that helps protect against most strains of *Neisseria meningitidis* group B (MenB) bacteria, which can cause meningitis (an infection of the lining of the brain and spinal cord) and septicaemia (blood poisoning). It has been used in the UK routine immunisation programme for babies since 2015 and has led to 75% reduction in MenB disease in vaccinated groups.

## How many doses of MenB do I need?

You need 2 doses of the vaccine for protection. The second dose must be given at least 4 weeks after the first dose, but can be given later, whenever you next attend the clinic. The vaccine is given by injection usually in the upper arm.

## Common side effects

It is common to get some swelling, redness or tenderness where you have the injection. You may also get a mild fever, nausea, headache or muscle aches but these symptoms should disappear after one or two days.

More serious side effects are rare. You can take over the counter pain medication such as paracetamol to manage these symptoms if needed.

## How soon will I be protected?

It takes at least 2 weeks from your second dose of vaccine for your body to produce antibodies to give you a good level of protection.

## Are there any other vaccines for meningococcal disease?

Cases of meningococcal disease due to other types of the bacteria are now rare in the UK, thanks to effective vaccination.

Teenagers in the UK are offered a vaccine against groups A, C, W and Y at school, but this vaccine will not protect you against MenB.

## Will it stop me getting meningitis and septicaemia?

Meningitis and septicaemia are rare but severe diseases that can kill or leave people with life changing disabilities and health problems. The vaccine protects against most strains of MenB bacteria but other bacteria can also cause meningitis and septicaemia so you should still be aware of the signs and symptoms and should seek urgent medical advice if you or someone else has these symptoms. See page 6 and 7.

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/meningitis/>

You can read about the Bexero MenB vaccination here:

<https://www.medicines.org.uk/emc/product/5168/pil#gref>

### Don't forget your MenB record card

You will need a second dose at least 4 weeks after the first dose to give you the best protection against Meningitis group B.



## Do the glass test

Someone with septicaemia may develop a few red or purple pin-prick spots with fever. Later on the rash can develop into purple blotches that do not fade under pressure. You can test for this by pressing the side of a drinking glass against the rash. If you have a fever and are developing spots or blotches that do not fade under pressure, get medical help immediately by calling 999 or getting someone to take you to the nearest hospital emergency department. Never wait for a wider rash. It can be a late sign or may not appear at all. If someone is ill and getting worse get medical help immediately.

On dark skin, check inside the eyelids or roof of the mouth where the spots may be more visible.



## Signs and Symptoms

Initially meningococcal disease can be like a bad case of flu. But anyone affected will usually become seriously ill within a few hours. Early treatment can save your life so it is sensible to be aware of some main signs and symptoms.

Severe headache

Stiff neck

High temperature

Seizures/fits

Drowsy or difficult to wake

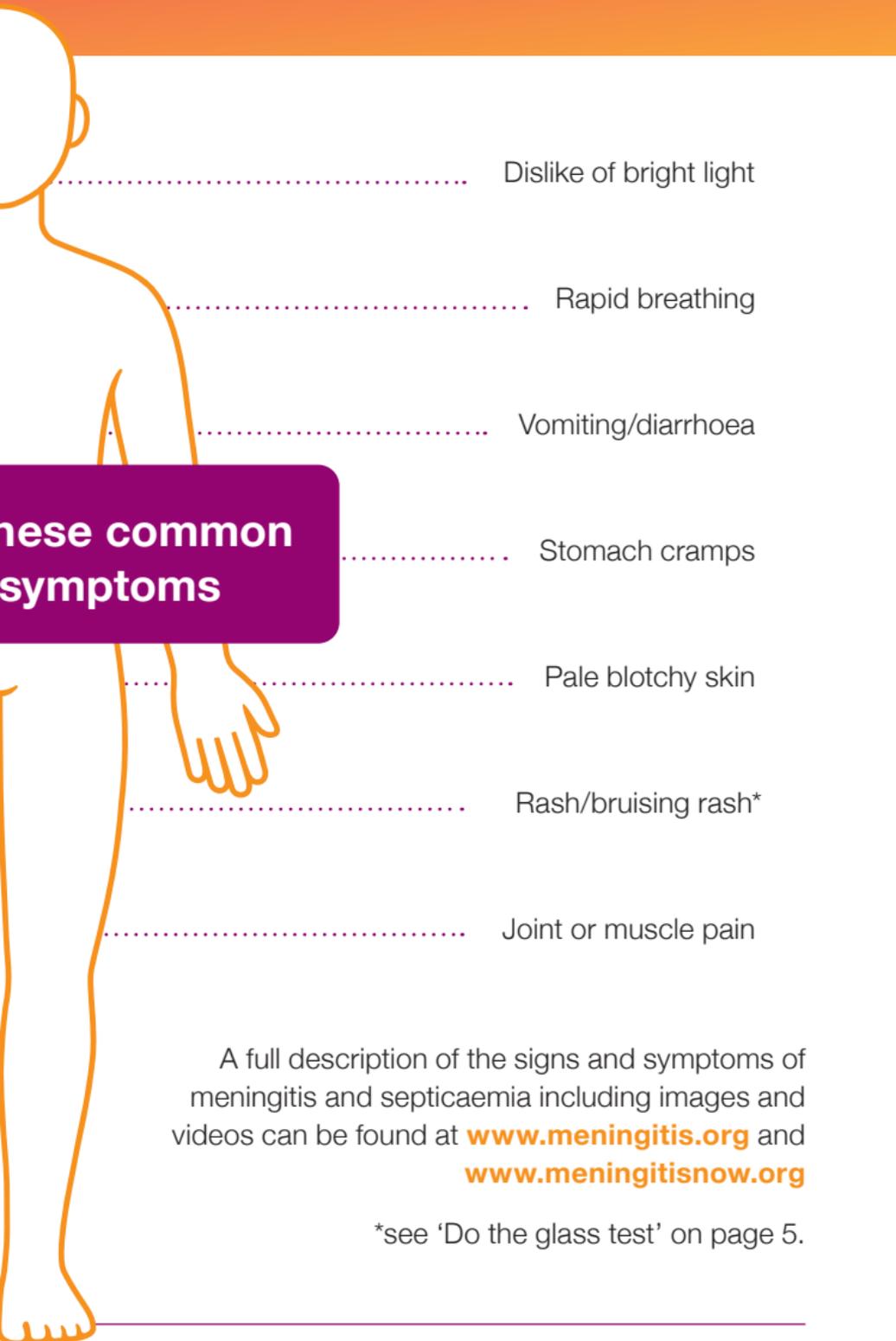
Confusion and/or irritability

Cold hands and feet

**Be aware of the signs and symptoms**

One or more of these symptoms may develop and they can appear in any order and be mixed between the two illnesses. It is important to seek early medical advice if you or a friend have symptoms of concern or a condition that is getting rapidly worse.

It is important to know the signs and symptoms of meningitis and septicaemia even if you are vaccinated as there are many other causes of these conditions.



**These common symptoms**

Dislike of bright light

Rapid breathing

Vomiting/diarrhoea

Stomach cramps

Pale blotchy skin

Rash/bruising rash\*

Joint or muscle pain

A full description of the signs and symptoms of meningitis and septicaemia including images and videos can be found at [www.meningitis.org](http://www.meningitis.org) and [www.meningitisnow.org](http://www.meningitisnow.org)

\*see 'Do the glass test' on page 5.



If you experience any suspected side effects to the vaccine, you can report these on the Yellow Card website, by calling 0800 731 6789 (9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday) or by downloading the Yellow Card app.

<https://yellowcard.mhra.gov.uk>

## For more information on meningitis and septicaemia please visit



For more information on the MenACWY vaccination you can read: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/menacwy-vaccine-information-for-young-people>



**Information on the MenB vaccination**  
from NHS.UK



**Meningitis Research Foundation**  
free helpline 0808 800 3344



**Meningitis Now**  
24 hour helpline 0808 801 0388

If you have any questions speak to your practice nurse, GP or pharmacist. You can also call NHS111 if you are concerned.

