

- **IMPORTANT: MENINGOCOCCAL DISEASE INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS
FOLLOWING A CASE AT COLLEGE**

Dear Parent or Guardian,

We are writing to inform you that a student in the Sixth Form college has been admitted to hospital with confirmed meningococcal meningitis. The individual is receiving treatment and is recovering.

All close contacts have been identified and, as a precaution given antibiotics, to prevent them from falling ill.

We believe this is an isolated case and not linked to any previous cases of meningitis in the East of England.

Please be reassured that the risk to your child is low, however we would like to make you aware of the signs and symptoms of meningitis and what you can do to stay safe.

What is meningitis?

Meningitis is when bacteria reach the meninges (the lining around the brain and spinal cord) and cause dangerous swelling and sometimes sepsis – an overwhelming and life-threatening response to infection

This letter gives you some information about the disease. There is no reason for you to make any change in the school routine and no reason for children to be kept at home.

How the disease spreads

The meningococcal bacteria very rarely spreads from child to child within class or 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 best 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 risk.

The people who need treatment have already been identified and treated.

Symptoms of meningococcal disease

The risk of another case in the college is very small, but it is sensible to be aware of the main signs and symptoms of meningococcal meningitis and septicaemia, outlined below.

Some common signs and symptoms of meningococcal disease

High temperature	Rapid breathing
Vomiting or diarrhoea and stomach cramps	Joint or muscle pain
	Cold hands and feet
Severe headache	Pale blotchy skin
Stiff neck	Confusion and/or irritability
Dislike of bright light	Drowsiness or difficult to wake
Rash or bruising rash	Seizures or fits

One or more of these symptoms may develop 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 with meningococcal disease will usually become seriously ill within a few hours. You should keep checking your child if they are unwell and contact your GP (family doctor) or NHS 111 for advice if you have any concerns.

If you become worried about your child's condition, particularly if they are getting worse, seek medical help **urgently** at the closest A&E Department or by dialling 999.

Be watchful and use your instincts. Early treatment can be life-saving.

Protecting against meningococcal disease

Meningococcal disease is a preventable illness and there are vaccines available to keep your child protected.

Please ensure your child is up to date with their routine vaccinations by contacting their GP practice or by visiting:

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

Further information on meningitis is available from:

The Meningitis Research Foundation, www.meningitis.org telephone: 0808 800 3344

Meningitis Now, www.meningitisnow.org telephone: 0808 80 10 388 helpline email address: helpline@meningitisnow.org

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Yours sincerely,

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