

Kent Meningitis Outbreak: Your Questions Answered

Information from The Allan Practice — 20 March 2026

We know this is a worrying time. Here is everything you need to know, including who needs antibiotics, who needs a vaccine, and when to call 999.

Important Numbers

Please keep these to hand:

- **UKHSA Outbreak Helpline** (general queries, no symptoms): 0344 225 3861 — Monday to Friday, 9am-5pm
 - **Meningitis Research Foundation** (free, 24 hours): 0808 800 3344
 - **Meningitis Now** (free, 9am-8pm): 0808 80 10 388
 - **NHS 111** — for urgent health advice at any time
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What is happening?

An outbreak of meningococcal group B disease (MenB) has been confirmed in the Canterbury area, linked to the University of Kent, Canterbury Christ Church University, and a number of local schools. Cases have been connected to Club Chemistry nightclub in Canterbury.

As of 20 March 2026, there are **29 confirmed or suspected cases**, with **13 confirmed as MenB**. Two young people have sadly died. All cases have required hospital admission. The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) is leading the response and publishing daily updates at 9:30am at **www.gov.uk**.

The reassuring news is that **genetic analysis has confirmed the Bexsero vaccine provides protection** against the strain causing this outbreak.

Does my child need antibiotics?

Your child should seek **free preventative antibiotics as soon as possible** if they:

- Visited **Club Chemistry in Canterbury on any date between 5 and 15 March 2026**, OR
- Are a **student or staff member at the University of Kent or Canterbury Christ Church University**, OR
- Have been **directly contacted by UKHSA** as a close contact of a confirmed case, OR
- Are a **Year 12 or 13 student at one of the linked schools in Kent** and have been notified by their school

If your child is still in Canterbury, antibiotics are available at:

- Gate Clinic, Kent and Canterbury Hospital
- Westgate Hall, Canterbury
- Senate Building, University of Kent
- Carey Building, Thanet Hub, Broadstairs

If your child has come home, please call us at The Allan Practice and we will arrange their antibiotics promptly — no appointment needed.

If none of the above apply, your child does not need antibiotics at this time and there is no need to contact us.

Does my child need a vaccine?

MenACWY vaccine

This is offered free on the NHS to all young people up to age 25. If your child has not had it, please call us at The Allan Practice and our practice nurse will arrange this directly — no need to see a GP first. Your child can also get it from their university GP if they are still away.

MenB vaccine (Bexsero)

This is now being offered **free** to:

- All University of Kent students and staff
- Canterbury Christ Church University students and staff
- Year 12 and 13 pupils at affected schools
- Anyone who attended Club Chemistry between 5 and 15 March
- Close contacts of confirmed or suspected cases

Students who have come home are being contacted with arrangements for local vaccination.

For everyone else, the MenB vaccine is available privately through pharmacies and travel clinics. **20,000 NHS vaccine doses are being released to the private market**, so availability should improve after recent shortages. A helpful starting point is to search online for "MenB vaccine near me" or contact a local pharmacy directly.

UKHSA has confirmed that the Bexsero vaccine **provides protection against the specific strain** causing this outbreak.

What symptoms should I watch for?

Meningitis can become serious very quickly. **Call 999 or go to A&E immediately** if your child develops any of the following:

- High fever
- Severe headache or stiff neck

- A rash that does not fade when pressed with a glass
- Drowsiness or confusion
- Vomiting
- Cold hands and feet

Do not wait. Do not call us. Call 999.

Where to find the latest information

- **Latest UKHSA updates:** www.gov.uk (search "meningitis Kent")
- **Kent-specific guidance:** www.kmhealthandcare.uk/meningitis-information

For urgent clinical advice, please contact NHS 111 or call 999.

Over 9,840 doses of prophylactic antibiotics and 2,360 vaccines have been given so far in the Kent area.