

## PATIENT NOTICE — MENINGITIS OUTBREAK

Updated: March 2026

The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) has confirmed a number of cases of invasive meningococcal disease (meningitis and septicaemia) in the Canterbury, Kent area. We are aware that many of our patients may have concerns. This notice explains what you need to know and how to contact us appropriately.

### WHEN TO CALL 999 OR GO TO A&E IMMEDIATELY

Do not call the surgery — dial 999 or go to your nearest A&E if you or someone you know has any of the following symptoms:

- **A rash that does not fade when pressed with a glass**
- **Sudden high fever, severe worsening headache or stiff neck**
- **Sensitivity to bright lights or confusion / difficulty staying awake**
- **Vomiting, joint pain, very cold hands and feet or seizures**
- **Rapid breathing or signs of septicaemia (blood poisoning)**

**Early treatment can be lifesaving. Do not wait — act immediately.**

### WHEN TO PHONE US OR REQUEST AN URGENT APPOINTMENT

Please call the surgery or request an urgent appointment only if:

- You have symptoms of meningitis that are not yet severe enough for 999 and you need clinical advice (use NHS 111 if unsure).
- You have been identified as a close contact — defined as someone who has had prolonged, direct exposure to an **infected person's** respiratory or throat secretions, usually within the 7 days before the onset of the index case's symptoms — and have not yet been contacted by UKHSA. **Close contact** typically includes living/sleeping in the same household, intimate kissing, or sharing close, confined spaces like university halls.

*If you are unsure whether you are a close contact, please call NHS 111 (free, 24 hours) before contacting the surgery.*

### IMMUNISATION RECORD QUERIES — PLEASE DO NOT CALL US

We are experiencing a high volume of calls about vaccination and immunisation records. To help us keep phone lines free for patients who need urgent clinical help, please use one of the following self-service options instead:

- NHS App — view your vaccination history including MenACWY, MenB and other immunisations.
- Our Practice Website — submit a query online via the contact/admin request form and our team will respond within 2–3 working days.

**Please do not call the surgery solely to check your immunisation records. This helps us prioritise patients with clinical needs.**

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## About the MenACWY Vaccine

The MenACWY vaccine provides good protection against MenA, MenC, MenW, and MenY strains. It is routinely offered to the following groups:

- Teenagers in school Years 9 and 10 (as part of the routine NHS schedule).
- First-time university and college students up to the age of 25 — eligible students who missed their school-age vaccination can request this from their GP.
- Other at-risk groups as advised by their GP or a healthcare professional.

However, the MenACWY vaccine does not protect against all forms of meningitis — other strains such as MenB can also circulate in young adults. This is why knowing the symptoms remains essential for everyone, regardless of vaccination status.

University and college students are at particular risk because they mix closely with large numbers of people, some of whom may unknowingly carry the bacteria. If you are a student or the parent of a student who is unsure whether they have received the MenACWY vaccine, please check your records via the NHS App or submit a query through our website — do not call the surgery.

## Further Information & Support

For more information about meningitis — including symptoms, treatment, and when to seek help — visit:

- [NHS: Meningitis — symptoms, causes and treatment](#)
- [UKHSA — Cases of invasive meningococcal disease confirmed in Kent](#)
- [Meningitis Research Foundation — 0808 800 3344 \(24 hours\)](#)
- [Meningitis Now — 0808 80 10 388 \(9am–8pm\)](#)

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*Thank you for helping us to keep phone lines available for those who need urgent help.*