Bereavement following meningitis

You are not alone
The death of someone close from meningitis* can be traumatic, distressing and painful. This sudden loss can lead to confusion, feelings of isolation and disbelief. You may have many questions about what has happened and what to expect in the weeks, months and years ahead.

We are here to answer your questions and offer our help and support. Please call our helpline or email us:

**Meningitis helpline 0808 80 10 388 (UK)**

**Helpline email** helpline@meningitisnow.org

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**Bereavement and grief**

**Bereavement** describes the state of loss and the time spent adjusting to life without your loved one. **Grief** represents the physical, emotional and social changes that happen during bereavement.

Grief is a natural response and affects everyone in different ways. You can experience many different physical symptoms such as headaches, a hollow feeling in your stomach, breathlessness, a dry mouth, physical pain, complete numbness or extreme exhaustion.

It is also natural to feel confusing and conflicting emotions, and experience some or all the following; guilt, anger, resentment, the need to blame, despair, disbelief, shock, intense sadness, loneliness and isolation.

Crying is a natural way of releasing emotion, but grief can also cause disturbed sleep, changes in appetite and withdrawal from those around you.

**Taking care of yourself**

It is important to acknowledge that grief is a natural response and there is no right or wrong way to grieve. During what may be the most difficult time of your life, you may feel isolated and that no-one understands how you feel. You may find that some people will try and avoid you, because they are not sure what to say, are afraid of saying the wrong thing or feel unable to cope with their own sadness. **There is no set time limit for grief, despite what others may say. Remember to do things when you are ready to do them and when it feels right.**

Friends and family will want to help, so try to accept their support; perhaps with practical, everyday jobs or to talk about what has happened. Together you can begin to share your precious stories and photographs to help you keep those memories alive. Remember also that some days you may want to be completely quiet and not want any company. It’s okay to feel like this.

*If you are concerned about your health in any way you should always consult your GP.*

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“I found it useful to talk to someone about how I felt who was unrelated to the loss. It was a good way to work through my feelings and unload.”

“Thank you for setting up the bereavement support group on Facebook; a group none of us would ever want to be part of if we had the choice, yet one which feels so comforting to belong to, as we know we are not travelling on this journey of grief alone.”

“Thank you for coming to listen to me. You always seem to say something that helps me in some way. You help me to make sense of the awful feelings I have at times and to feel normal under the circumstances.”

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*Meningitis is used to describe meningitis and meningococcal septicaemia*
**Children and loss**

Children also experience grief. They need honesty, information and involvement following the death of someone close. Excluding them at such a painful time may feel like a form of protection, but it can lead to confusion and anxiety, and affect their ability to fully grieve.

Children need to feel that they can talk openly, so speaking to them in words they understand and listening to their thoughts and feelings is important. Sharing stories and photographs will help them keep their memories alive. Books and resources designed for bereaved children can be helpful to use together and we can help provide these. It is also important to inform school.

Additional professional support like counselling or a creative therapy can be arranged. The charities Winston’s Wish (08088 020 021) and Child Bereavement UK (0800 02 888 40) can also provide advice on supporting a bereaved child or young person.

**Support for you**

We help and support thousands of people every year throughout the UK; answering questions, providing information and offering emotional, practical and financial support. We recognise that each person’s experience of meningitis differs greatly, so finding the right help and support when you need it most is vital.

Our **community support officers** can offer continued contact and support for you, for as long as needed. If you feel more professional support is required, we can make a referral to a counsellor through our **Rebuilding Futures Fund**.

For most bereaved families it can be helpful to talk to someone who has experienced the devastation that this terrible disease causes. Our Founder Steve Dayman, who lost his son Spencer in 1982, can visit you in your home, share his experience and explain the support we offer.

We also have a closed and moderated bereavement support Facebook group: [www.facebook.com/groups/mnbereavement](http://www.facebook.com/groups/mnbereavement)

Our **Forever events** bring together people bereaved by meningitis to provide information and support, with dedicated time to remember loved ones together.

Unexpected financial pressures, such as funeral costs, can be a huge additional burden. We can provide **financial support** towards a funeral and headstone; helping reduce the associated stress and anxiety.

Further information about all our support can be found on our website at [www.MeningitisNow.org](http://www.MeningitisNow.org)

**Cruse Bereavement Care** (0808 808 1677), **The Compassionate Friends** (0345 123 2304) and the **Samaritans** (116 123) can also provide bereavement support services.
Remembering someone special

Many families tell us it is a great source of comfort to have a place to remember and share their loss. A **Forever Fund** is a lasting way to celebrate a loved one’s life - a place where family and friends can share their precious memories and help make sure we can be there for others affected by meningitis.

If you would like any further information about Forever Funds, please contact:

Tel: **01453 769082**  
Email: [foreverfunds@meningitisnow.org](mailto:foreverfunds@meningitisnow.org)  
Web: [http://foreverfunds.meningitisnow.org](http://foreverfunds.meningitisnow.org)

Who we are

Meningitis Now is the UK’s largest meningitis charity. We are saving lives and rebuilding futures through awareness, research and support.

Meningitis Helpline  
**0808 80 10 388** (UK)  
[www.MeningitisNow.org](http://www.MeningitisNow.org)

Tel: 01453 768000  
info@meningitisnow.org

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Registered Charity Number 803016 (England & Wales) SC037790 (Scotland).  
Company Registration Number 2469130.  
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