

Meningitis in adults - adults get it too

Many people unfortunately still believe that meningitis only affects babies and young children, which alarmingly puts lives at risk.

Meningitis can be difficult to spot, particularly in the early stages, but it can strike quickly and kill within hours.

Make sure you know the **signs and symptoms** and seek urgent medical help if you are concerned.

Who is at risk?

Meningitis is often thought of as a disease that only affects babies and young children. But the truth is that meningitis can affect anyone of any age, with the risk increasing in older adults as our immune systems weaken as we get older.

To find out more about meningitis in adults, please [download an awareness guide](#).

What is meningitis?

Meningitis is the inflammation of the membranes that surround the brain and spinal cord. The most common causes of meningitis are bacteria and viruses.

Bacterial meningitis can be fatal and needs rapid admission to hospital and urgent medical treatment. Whilst most adults will make a good recovery, around 10% will die and some will be left with lifelong disabilities. Some bacteria that cause meningitis can also cause septicaemia (blood poisoning).

Viral meningitis is very rarely life-threatening, but can still make people very unwell. Most people will make a good recovery, but recovery can be slow.

Find out more about the **after-effects** of meningitis and septicaemia.

Know the signs and symptoms

Meningitis can affect anyone of any age, at any time; it can strike quickly and kill within hours.

Make sure you know the **signs and symptoms**. If you're concerned you or a loved one may have meningitis, seek urgent medical help.

- Trust your instincts
- If you live alone, make sure someone knows you are feeling unwell
- Describe the symptoms and say you think it could be meningitis or septicaemia
- If you have had medical advice and are still worried, get medical help again

Preventing meningitis

Vaccines are the only way to prevent serious diseases like meningitis.

There are several vaccines to prevent meningitis routinely offered to babies and young children, teenagers and young people, and those aged 65 and over as part of the UK immunisation schedule. However, there isn't a vaccine to prevent all types.

See more information on our [vaccines page](#).

Adults Get It Too campaign

A study carried out for us* reveals that 96% of people aged over 65 do not consider themselves to be at risk from meningitis and septicaemia, despite the risk of meningitis increasing in older adults.

The study also highlights that three-quarters of this age group are not confident in recognising the signs and symptoms of the disease.

That's why we're calling on people over 65 to learn the [signs and symptoms](#) to help look after themselves and their loved ones. Without vaccines for all types of meningitis, remaining vigilant is vital.

You can [download an awareness guide](#) that includes the signs and symptoms of meningitis and information about meningitis in adults.

We are also looking for people over 65 who have had meningitis to [share their story](#), to help raise awareness. [Can you help?](#)

*Populous Research undertook a survey of 1,100 adults across the UK to understand adult attitudes to meningitis and the level of risk they think the disease poses to them.

Signs and symptoms in adults and children

Get more information about the signs and symptoms of meningitis.

[Download an awareness guide](#).

Adults get it too; [read Mike M's meningitis story](#)

Contact our helpline

Call our helpline 0808 80 10 388
or email helpline@meningitisnow.org



Meningitis Now

Fern House • Bath Road
Stroud • Gloucestershire • GL5 3TJ
Tel: 01453 768000 • Fax: 01453 768001
info@meningitisnow.org
www.MeningitisNow.org