

Meningitis symptoms

Please be vigilant if a child presents with any of the following symptoms. There may not always be a rash. Symptoms can appear in any order.

Look out for the following:

A high temperature

A temperature of 38°C or higher or cold hands and feet and is shivering.

Dislikes bright lights

Squints or covers their eyes when exposed to light.

Headache and neck stiffness

Has a very bad headache or a stiff neck

Pain or body stiffness

Has aches or pains - stomach, joint or muscle pain. Has a stiff body with jerking movements or a floppy lifeless body.

Tummy symptoms

Is vomiting or refusing to feed.

Confused, tired or irritable

Is very sleepy, lethargic, not responding to you or difficult to wake. Is irritable when you pick them up or has a high-pitched or moaning cry. Is confused or delirious.

Skin colour

Has pale or bluish skin.

Unusual breathing

Is breathing fast or breathless.

Soft spot

Has a tense or bulging soft spot on their head - the soft spot on their head is called the anterior fontanelle.

Seizures

Has a seizure.

Rash

A rash that doesn't fade when you press a glass tumbler against it.

[The Meningitis Research Foundation has a visual symptoms checker](#)

How to check for a rash

Check all of your child's body.

Look for tiny red or brown pin-prick marks that do not fade when a glass is pressed to the skin.

These marks can later change into larger red or purple blotches and into blood blisters.

The rash can be harder to see on darker skin, so check on the palms of the hands or the soles of the feet.

A rash is not the only symptom of blood poisoning (septicaemia). Do not wait for it to appear before getting medical help. The rash may be the last symptom to appear and can spread very quickly

The glass or tumbler test

1. Press the bottom or side of a clear drinking glass firmly against the rash
2. Check if the rash fades under the pressure of the glass
3. If the rash does not fade, your child may have septicaemia caused by the meningitis germ
4. Get medical help at once



Above: It doesn't fade if you press the side of a clear glass firmly against the skin

If you think your child is seriously ill, call 999 or bring your child immediately to the nearest emergency department

If you're not sure, contact your GP or [GP Out of Hours Service](#) immediately and ask for an urgent appointment. Bring your child immediately to your nearest hospital emergency department for children if:

- you are unable to contact your GP
- they are unable to see your child urgently