

Meningococcal disease is caused by the type of bacteria called *Neisseria meningitidis* (also known as meningococcus). This bacteria can live in the nose and throat of healthy people without causing illness.

It spreads through:

- Coughing and sneezing (aerosol or droplet spread)
- Close contact (such as kissing or sharing a drink)

At any time, up to 1 in 10 adults may carry the bacteria without knowing it or feeling sick.

Types of Meningococcal disease

There are five main types (called serotypes) that can cause illness in people: **A, B, C, W, and Y.**

- Meningitis (infection of the lining of the brain and spinal cord)
- Septicaemia (blood poisoning)

These conditions are common in the winter months, and people at highest risk include young children and teenagers.

Protection and vaccination

A vaccine against Meningococcal B (MenB) is available. It also offers some protection against gonorrhoea.

- Learn more in [a guide to the Meningococcal B vaccine for protection against gonorrhoea | HSC Public Health Agency](#)

More information

- For detailed information on Meningococcal Disease in the UK, visit the UK [Health Security Agency \(UKHSA\) site](#).
- For information specific in to Northern Ireland:
[Most recent calendar year surveillance tables](#).
[Most recent Epidemiological year surveillance tables](#).
[Annual immunisation and vaccine preventable diseases reports](#).

[Print](#)