



## Important Health Information - Meningococcal (Bacterial) Meningitis

Dear Student,

Please find below important health information from Public Health England.

Regards,  
Jamie Horsley  
Head of Student Services

12 January 2017

Dear Students,

I am writing to inform you that a student at the University has been admitted to hospital with septicaemia, probably caused by the meningococcal bacteria. There is no reason to make any change in the campus routine and no reason for you to stay at home. Please continue your business as usual and note that exams this week are continuing as planned.

Meningococcal bacteria are carried in the back of the throat of about one in ten people at any one time, but only very rarely cause illness. Most people who carry the bacteria become immune to them. The bacteria do not spread easily and only those who have had prolonged, close contact with the person are at a slightly greater risk of getting ill. These people have been identified by the Public Health England South West Health Protection Team and offered antibiotics to reduce the chances of the bacteria spreading. Others who attend the university are not at increased risk of developing meningococcal disease and no further wider action is necessary at the present time.

Although the risk of another case in the University is very small, it is sensible to be aware of the signs and symptoms.

Early signs and symptoms of meningitis or sepsis can include non-blanching rash, severe headache, vomiting, neck stiffness, muscle pain and fever with cold hands and feet. **NOT ALL OF THESE SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS MAY SHOW AT ONCE**, but someone with this illness will become very ill. The illness may progress over one or two days, but it can develop very rapidly, sometimes in a matter of hours.

Diagnosis in the early stages can be difficult. The early signs can be like bad 'flu' symptoms but be **WATCHFUL, do not wait for a rash** and use your instincts. If you or someone you know becomes ill with some of these signs or symptoms, contact the doctor urgently and ask for advice. Out of hours call **NHS 111**.

The highest risk of meningitis is in the first year of university, particularly the first few months. 'Fresher' students going to university for the first time are advised to have a vaccination to prevent meningitis W disease, a particularly severe strain that is becoming more common nationally. The Men ACWY vaccine is given by a single injection into the upper arm and protects against four different causes of meningitis and septicaemia. First-year students ('Freshers'), including overseas and mature students up to the age of 25, should contact student health or their GP if they have not yet received the Men ACWY vaccine. Second year students who missed their vaccination last year are also eligible.

For further information please contact Public Health England on 0300 300 8162 option 1 option 1.

**Further information is available from:**

The Meningitis Research Foundation: <https://www.meningitis.org> 0800 800 3344 (24hr)

Meningitis Now: <https://www.meningitisnow.org> 0808 80 10 388 (9am - 10pm)

If you have any questions please call the Health Protection Team on 0300 303 8162.

With best wishes and warm regards,  
Public Health England staff

**Public Health England South West**

Tel: +44 (0)300 303 8161

3rd Floor, 2 Rivergate, Temple Quay, Bristol, BS1 6EH

Follaton House, Plymouth Road, Totnes, TQ9 5NE

[www.gov.uk/phe](http://www.gov.uk/phe)

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