

Signs and symptoms of invasive meningococcal disease

Although rare, invasive meningococcal disease can affect any age. Babies and young children under five years of age are most at risk. A baby or young child with invasive meningococcal disease may:

- have a high fever, with cold hands and feet
- vomit and refuse to feed
- feel agitated and not want to be picked up
- become drowsy, floppy and unresponsive
- grunt or breathe rapidly
- have an unusual high-pitched or moaning cry
- have pale, blotchy skin, and a red rash that doesn't fade when a glass is rolled over it
- have a tense, bulging soft spot on their head (fontanelle)
- have a stiff neck and dislike bright lights
- have convulsions or seizures

The above symptoms can appear in any order, and some may not appear at all.

In older children, teenagers and adults, the symptoms of invasive meningococcal disease can include:

- a fever, with cold hands and feet
- vomiting
- drowsiness and difficulty waking up
- confusion and irritability
- severe muscle pain
- pale, blotchy skin, and a distinctive rash (although not everyone will have this)
- a severe headache
- stiff neck
- sensitivity to light (photophobia)
- convulsion or seizures

Again, these symptoms can appear in any order, and not everyone will get all of them.

However, it is important that parents/carers don't wait for a rash to develop. If your child is unwell and getting worse, seek medical help immediately.

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