

Meningococcal infection

Meningococcal infection is a serious illness caused by a bacterium known as meningococcus. There are several different groups of meningococci and cases of group B meningococcal infection continue to occur in the UK. Since the introduction of vaccination against group C meningococcus in the UK in 1999, infection due to this bacterium has become rare.

In 2013, an adolescent MenC booster dose was introduced to improve protection in teenagers and reduce their risk of catching the infection as university freshers. From autumn 2015, a new meningitis vaccine, MenACWY conjugate vaccine, has replaced the MenC vaccine in the adolescent schools programme. This is in response to a rapid increase in cases of a highly aggressive form of meningococcal group W (MenW) disease.

The new vaccine is also available to new UK university entrants (first time entrants to higher education in a UK university setting), including international students, up to their 25th birthday. Any 'freshers' in the 17-24 year age group who request it can be vaccinated. New entrants who have already received a MenC vaccine over the age of 10 years should still receive MenACWY conjugate vaccine to ensure protection against the additional groups A, W and Y. The MenACWY conjugate vaccine can be administered at any interval after MenC vaccine.

*Students are strongly advised to have the MenACWY conjugate vaccination **before arriving in Cambridge**. If this is not possible, please discuss it with your doctor or college nurse as soon as possible after your arrival.*

Further information can be found at <http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/vaccinations/Pages/men-acwy-vaccine.aspx>.

Mumps and measles

Mumps and measles can be serious infections. We continue to see cases and clusters of both these diseases.

Many people now in their teens and twenties have either not been immunised at all or have had only one dose of MMR vaccination. People born in the UK after 1980 are likely to be susceptible to measles and mumps if they have not had two doses of MMR. This is because they are less likely to be immune as a result of exposure to natural disease.

*MMR vaccine can be given to people of any age. National policy is to provide **two** doses of MMR vaccine at appropriate intervals for all eligible individuals. We strongly recommend that all students ensure that they have had **two** doses of the MMR vaccine before coming to university.*

Tuberculosis (TB)

TB is a serious but curable disease. Like most countries worldwide, the UK has been seeing an increase in TB that is highest in London and the other major cities where the risk factors tend to be concentrated. The TB rate is much higher in the foreign-born population than in the UK-born, the rate being also higher in certain ethnic groups in the first few years after they enter the country. In the UK, those at most risk of developing TB disease include people who are close contacts of a person with infectious TB and those who have visited, lived or worked for a long time in countries with a high rate of TB. Countries that have high rates of TB over 40/100,000 of the population are listed at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/tuberculosis-tb-by-country-rates-per-100000-people>.

Diagnosis of infection in young people can be delayed because often neither they nor their doctor consider it as a possibility. If you develop symptoms, such as a persistent cough that lasts for three weeks or more; appetite and weight loss; and fever and sweating at night, you should discuss this with your doctor or college nurse.

Influenza

Influenza is an acute viral infection of the respiratory tract. There are three types of influenza virus: A, B and C. Influenza A and B are responsible for most illness. Influenza is highly infectious with an incubation period of one to three days. Serious illness and death from influenza are highest among young babies, older people and those with underlying disease, particularly chronic lung and heart disease, or those who are immunosuppressed.

The currently available influenza vaccines give 70 to 80% protection against infection with influenza virus strains well matched with those in the vaccine. The vaccine is given annually between October and December. Protection afforded by the vaccine lasts for about one year.

If you suffer from chronic lung, heart, kidney or liver disease or have diabetes or are otherwise immunosuppressed, please discuss this with your doctor or college nurse.

For further information see <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/seasonal-influenza-guidance-data-and-analysis>.

Further information

The Cambridge Student Health website (<http://www.camstudenthealth.nhs.uk>), which has been developed by local GP surgeries, provides information and guidance about a wide range of health matters and services for University students.

Health and healthcare

Arriving in a new country is a very busy time and there are a lot of changes to go through. For example, there are differences in food, weather and customs to cope with. In this type of situation, with all its stresses, you can find yourself paying less attention than usual to your health.

Existing health problems can also be made worse by the effects of adjusting to unfamiliar food, a different climate and the emotional strains of being away from home. It can be easy to concentrate on your studies and forget about taking care of yourself. This section aims to give advice on looking after yourself, as well as practical information on how to obtain medical treatment. It also explains students' entitlement to free medical treatment under the UK state health system.

How the medical system is organised in the UK

GP's (Doctor's) Surgery or Health Centre

This is your first point of contact for medical treatment. UK residents register with a Health Centre or GP's Surgery. Most illnesses and other problems can be treated by the GP, but if you need to see a specialist, the GP will refer you to an appropriate hospital department (see below). As well as consultations with a Doctor, most GP's Surgeries and Health Centres provide a range of community health services: for example vaccinations, women's health clinics, services for parents of young children, family planning, contraception and sexual health. GP Surgeries and Health Centres are normally open during the daytime and early evening. However, they normally have an answering-machine message about where you can get help when the Surgery or Health Centre is closed. Your local hospital may also have an NHS Walk-in Clinic.

Hospital

If your GP refers you to hospital for treatment, you will usually be given an appointment to see a consultant (specialist doctor). Depending on the medical problem, you may be treated as an in-patient (where you are admitted to a ward and stay there overnight or longer) or as an out-patient (where you visit the hospital for an appointment).

If you think you need to see a specialist, you should approach your GP first and ask her or him to refer you.

Accident and Emergency (A&E) Departments

Some (but not all) hospitals have Accident and Emergency departments. These departments are open 24 hours a day.

If you need immediate medical assistance (for example, because of an accident), telephone 999. The call is free including from mobile phones. An operator will ask you which emergency service you need (Fire, Police or Ambulance). For urgent medical assistance ask for the ambulance service. Be ready to tell the emergency services what has happened and exactly where you are, especially the street name.

Once you are connected to the Emergency Medical Dispatcher, she or he will ask you questions about the condition of the patient and may offer advice on what to do until the ambulance arrives. If the person is badly injured and needs to go to hospital, an ambulance will be dispatched to take the person to a hospital Accident and Emergency (A&E) department.

If you need urgent treatment, but you are well enough to travel, you should make your own way by bus or taxi to an Accident and Emergency (A&E) department, or ask a friend to take you.

There are no fees for Accident and Emergency services (as long as you are not admitted as an in-patient and do not access follow-up treatment), and you do not have to have paid the immigration health surcharge to use them.

Note: You should only use A&E Departments for emergency treatment for serious illness or injury.