



## Points to be aware of in relation to meningococcal disease:

*(Information contained in this summary document was sourced from the National Immunisation Office of the HSE)*

### ✚ It is important to know the **Symptoms and Signs of Meningococcal Disease**

There are two types of meningococcal disease – meningitis (inflammation of the lining of the brain) and septicaemia (blood poisoning). Meningitis and meningococcal septicaemia may not always be easy to spot at first, because the symptoms can be similar to those of flu. They may develop over one or two days, but sometimes develop in a **matter of hours**. Symptoms do not appear in any particular order and some may not appear at all. The common symptoms and signs are:

- High temperature, fever, possibly with cold hands and feet
- Vomiting, sometimes diarrhoea
- Headache
- Neck stiffness (unable to touch the chin with the chest)
- Joint or muscle pains, sometimes stomach cramps with septicaemia
- Dislike of bright lights
- Drowsiness
- Fitting
- The patient may be confused or disorientated

The patient may or may not have a **rash**. The “glass test” can be used to see if the rash might be septicaemia. If the side of a clear drinking glass is pressed firmly onto the rash it will not fade if it is septicaemia. **In a small number of cases a rash may fade at first, but may later change into one that does not.**

### ✚ Meningococcal meningitis and septicaemia need **urgent** medical attention.

### ✚ Students should get their meningococcal C vaccination if they have not already received it. Meningococcal C vaccine is recommended for all children and young adults under the age of 23 years. If students have not already received the meningococcal C vaccine they should arrange to get it from student health services or their GP. The vaccine is provided free by the HSE but a consultation fee may apply for the administration of the vaccine. However, they have to realise that even when vaccinated against Meningococcal C, they can still get meningococcal disease because there is no vaccine for meningococcal B disease which is the commonest strain in Ireland.

### ✚ Students should look after each others welfare and check on each other if absent from class or social gatherings.

### ✚ Inform someone (a friend, a housemate, student health centre etc.) if they are feeling ill, so that they can be monitored and prompt medical attention sought if their condition deteriorates.

Further information on meningococcal disease is available on the Health Protection Surveillance Website [www.hpsc.ie](http://www.hpsc.ie)