# Newsletter copy

## Meningococcal disease – know the symptoms and act fast

Parents and young adults are urged to be alert to the symptoms of meningococcal disease as we head into late winter and spring, the peak season for this disease.

Meningococcal disease is caused by a bacterial infection that can lead to serious illness or death, if not recognised and treated in time.

While anyone can contract meningococcal disease, infection is more common in children aged 0 – 4 years and in people aged 15 – 25 years.

Meningococcal disease has many symptoms, some of which can be similar to other respiratory illnesses.   
  
Symptoms of meningococcal disease include:

* sudden onset of fever
* headache
* neck stiffness
* joint pain
* dislike of bright lights
* nausea
* vomiting
* irritability
* a red-purple rash that doesn’t disappear when pressure is applied (a rash does not always appear, or it may occur late in the disease).

In young children, symptoms may also include:

* irritability
* difficulty waking up
* high-pitched crying
* rapid or laboured breathing
* refusal to eat.

### Act fast and seek medical advice quickly

Symptoms usually occur suddenly and can get worse quickly, so it’s important to seek urgent medical treatment.

If you’ve already seen a doctor but symptoms continue to worsen, consult your doctor again or go to the Emergency Department.

A rash may not always appear or may appear late. Don't wait for a rash.

### Protect your child against meningococcal disease

Several vaccines against meningococcal disease are available in NSW and provided free through the National Immunisation Program for infants, adolescents, Aboriginal children and people with certain medical conditions. Speak to your GP about the best option for you and your family.

For more information about meningococcal disease, visit [health.nsw.gov.au/meningococcal](https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/meningococcal/Pages/default.aspx)