

Key messages for meningitis communications

The suggestions below are intended for outreach to key audiences. These sets of messages are comprehensive, but the channel and context for outreach to a particular target audience should dictate the level of depth and detail provided. For example, a clinic poster would allow space for one to two priority messages. Alternatively, a leaflet could incorporate more topics and greater detail.

The majority of these messages were taken or adapted from respondent submissions to the questionnaire and the communications tools provided. Other sources include CoMO materials and the WHO's Global Road Map to Defeat Meningitis by 2030.



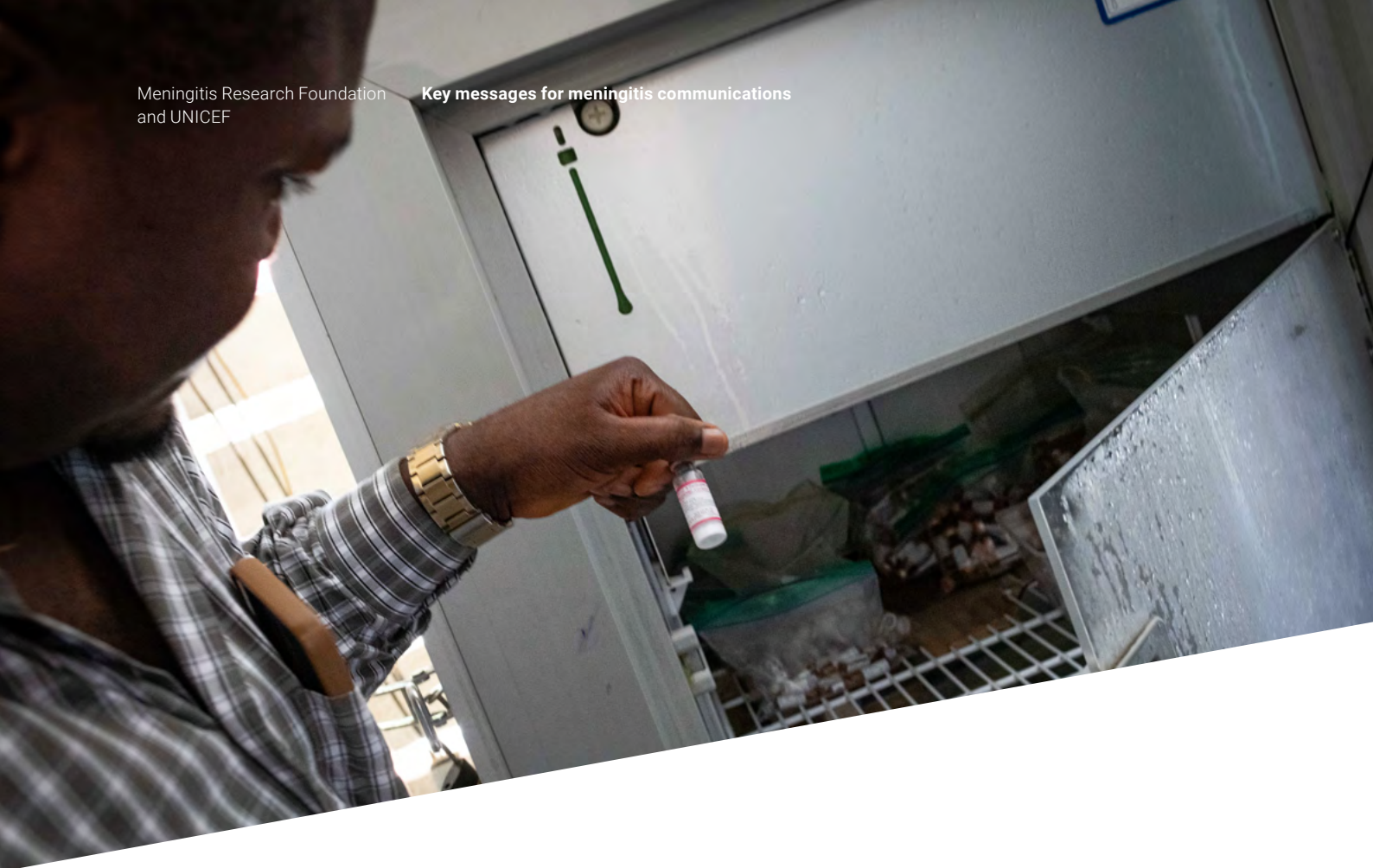
Vaccination

- Meningitis vaccines save lives.
- The best way to prevent meningitis is through vaccination.
- Meningitis vaccinations are safe and effective. Contact your healthcare provider/clinic or attend a community vaccination campaign to learn more.
- Get vaccinated at the upcoming campaign: [where, when, who]



Risks and preventions

- Meningitis is a serious disease that can affect all ages and cause death within 24 hours.
- Meningitis affects the brain and spinal cord. It can cause serious, permanent physical and mental impacts.
- Vaccines can prevent many causes of meningitis.
- Meningitis is spread from person to person through close contact.
- You can prevent meningitis: get vaccinated, cover your nose and mouth when you sneeze/cough, wash your hands regularly with soap under running water, ensure your home is well ventilated and avoid crowds during meningitis outbreaks.



Signs and symptoms

- Common symptoms of meningitis are neck stiffness, fever, confusion or an altered mental state, headaches, nausea and vomiting.
- Babies can have swelling in the soft spot in their head (fontanelle).
- Meningitis is fast to develop and can affect anyone.
- If you suspect meningitis, seek medical attention immediately.



Treatment

- Meningitis is a medical emergency and can develop quickly. If you suspect meningitis, seek medical attention immediately.
- Antibiotics are used to treat bacterial meningitis. Treatment for viral meningitis involves rest and relief of symptoms.
- Family contacts of probable or confirmed cases should seek medical attention.
- Survivors of meningitis may require long-term treatment.



Impact (awareness)

- Meningitis affects millions of people every year, with the greatest burden in the 26 countries that cross Africa's "Meningitis Belt."
- Despite progress and available vaccines, there were still an estimated 214,000 deaths from meningitis in 2021 (the most recent annual estimates)^{2,3}
 - 1 in 10 people who get meningitis die^{2,3}.
 - 1 in 5 people are left with lifelong disabilities^{1,4}.
- Bacterial meningitis is the deadliest form of meningitis, with the World Health Organization estimating that around 1 in 6 people who get it will die.¹
- Meningitis affects all ages and young children are most at risk.
- Meningitis can be prevented with vaccines, but progress in defeating meningitis lags behind other vaccine preventable diseases.



Outbreak/Epidemic

- In an outbreak get vaccinated, avoid crowds, wash your hands routinely, know the symptoms of meningitis and seek medical help if you suspect meningitis.
- Get vaccinated at the upcoming campaign: [where, when, who]



Support

- Meningitis can have a life-changing and permanent impact.
- Long-term effects of meningitis include deafness, brain damage, learning difficulties, seizures, physical difficulties and loss of limbs.
- Meningitis impacts people emotionally, financially and socially. It causes lives to be changed forever because of long-term medical needs and disabilities. Social, economic and legal support for long-term disability may be available from local and national organisations. Ask for information at the health clinic.



Surveillance

- Every year, there are more than 2.3 million cases of bacterial and viral meningitis around the world ^{2,3}
- Around half of all cases and deaths from meningitis occur in the 26 countries within the African “Meningitis Belt” ^{2,3,4}
- Meningitis can strike anyone at any time and bacterial meningitis can cause outbreaks and epidemics.
- Surveillance, including case detection and laboratory confirmation, is essential to monitor incidence and detect outbreaks.



Investment

This topic was not represented in the questionnaire, but respondents did identify policymakers as a key audience. The objective of outreach to policymakers would aim to generate financial investments and public commitment to meningitis programs.

- Meningitis causes serious consequences to health systems, economies and societies. Despite the high burden of meningitis, global and local support is insufficient.
- Vaccines are proven to prevent meningitis, but progress has not matched that of other vaccine-preventable diseases.
- Invest in meningitis strategies. Your commitments and support will save lives and protect our communities and children from meningitis.
- During World Immunization Week, show your support for meningitis prevention and vaccines.
- Support community awareness raising every World Meningitis Day to play your part in the WHO’s Global Road Map to Defeat Meningitis by 2030.

References

- (1) World Health Organization. Meningitis: key facts [Internet]. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2023 [cited 2024 Feb]. Available from: <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/meningitis>
- (2) Meningitis Research Foundation. Meningitis progress tracker [Internet]. Bristol: Meningitis Research Foundation; 2024 [cited 2025 Feb]. Available from: <https://www.meningitis.org/mpt>
- (3) (3) Global Burden of Disease Collaborative Network. Global burden of disease study 2021 [Internet]. Seattle: Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation; 2021 [cited 2025 Feb]. Available from: <https://vizhub.healthdata.org/gbd-results/>
- (4) Global Health Estimates (who.int): deaths by cause, age, sex by country and region, 2000-2019. World Health Organization, Geneva 2020 (accessed October 2023).