

Tense or bulging  
soft spot

High temperature

In babies under  
three months it  
can be normal or low

Unusual grunting  
sounds

Irritable when  
picked up, with a  
high-pitched or  
moaning cry

Extreme shivering

'Pin prick' rash /  
marks or purple  
bruises anywhere  
on the body

Pain / irritability  
from muscle  
aches or severe  
limb / joint pain

Cold hands and feet

Very sleepy /staring expression /  
too sleepy to wake up

Vomiting / refusing to feed

Blotchy skin,  
getting paler or  
turning blue

Breathing fast /  
difficulty breathing


A stiff body with  
jerky movements,  
or else floppy  
and lifeless

Sometimes  
diarrhoea

# Meningitis baby watch

Is your baby getting  
worse fast? Babies can  
get ill very quickly,  
so check often.

**Free information and support:**

 UK | 0808 800 3344  
IRE | 1800 41 33 44

 [meningitis.org](http://meningitis.org)

 [helpline@meningitis.org](mailto:helpline@meningitis.org)

**Not every baby gets all of these  
symptoms and they can appear in any order.**

 **Meningitis  
Research  
Foundation**



**meningitis.org**

# Meningitis & sepsis

## What should I do if I am worried?

**Trust your instincts.** If you think your baby has meningitis or sepsis, get medical help immediately. Say that you are worried it could be meningitis or sepsis.

## Know the symptoms

Early symptoms of meningitis and sepsis (the blood poisoning form of the disease, sometimes referred to as septicaemia) can be like other childhood illnesses, but a baby will usually get ill quickly and get worse fast.

Watch out for tiny red or brown pin prick marks which can change into purple blotches or blood blisters. If your baby gets a rash, do the 'Tumbler Test'.

The darker the skin the harder it is to see a rash, so check for spots over baby's whole body, especially on paler areas like palms of the hands, the soles of the feet, on the tummy, inside the eyelids, and on the roof of the mouth.

## How can I protect my baby?

The best way to protect your baby is to get them vaccinated. Vaccines are available that prevent the most common severe causes of meningitis. Vaccines do not protect against all causes of meningitis, so make sure you know the symptoms. Early recognition and treatment give the best chance of a good recovery.

## The 'Tumbler Test'



Press a clear glass tumbler firmly against the rash. If you can see the marks clearly through the glass, get urgent medical help immediately.

**Remember, a very ill baby needs medical help even if they have only a few spots, a rash that fades or no rash at all.**

Parents or carers are often unsure when to call for medical help when they suspect meningitis or sepsis.

We have worked with health professionals to create this red and amber symptoms checker, to tell you what actions to take.

Scan the QR code to access the checker and other vital information.



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