

As you may have seen in recent news reports, health authorities have noted an increase in the number of people falling ill with meningitis. This increase has been linked to the high prevalence of flu and to the swine flu pandemic. As a result, we encourage you to stay alert for symptoms and to seek medical advice where necessary.

What to do if you suspect meningitis:

People with meningitis can deteriorate rapidly and early treatment is vital.

If you suspect that you have meningitis, please seek urgent medical attention.

Symptoms to look out for:

Symptoms of meningitis can be very similar to those of flu. They include:

- Vomiting
- Fever and headache
- Stiff neck, joint pains and aching muscles
- Sleepiness, confusion or unconsciousness
- Skin rash and spots
- Fitting
- Sensitivity to bright light.

Symptoms can develop very quickly and have serious effects – **if you experience these symptoms, it is important that you seek medical help straight away.**

Who to contact if you need help:

If you are concerned that you may have meningitis, please contact one of the following as soon as possible:

- Unitec's Mt Albert Campus Medical Centre (Clinic 41) on **ext 8407**
- Healthline on **0800 611 116** (available 24 hours a day)
- Your own GP
- Accident and Emergency Department of your local hospital.

What else you should know

Meningitis can be caused by meningococcal disease. While not a highly infectious disease, meningococcal disease can cause deafness, paralysis, some neurological damage and, occasionally, death. Meningococcal disease can also result in blood poisoning (septicaemia).

How to stay healthy

We want you to stay fit and well, so please take the following steps to look after your health and that of your friends and family:

- Avoid sharing food or drink, as well as any cups, bottles, cigarettes, lip balms, etc
- Wash your hands regularly and thoroughly with soap under warm running water or with alcohol-based hand gel
- Practice proper cough and sneeze etiquette by covering your mouth and/or nose and placing tissues into covered bins.

Remember that you should stay away from lectures or tutorials if you become ill.

How to find out more:

For more information visit the Ministry of Health's [website](http://www.moh.govt.nz/meningococcal) at www.moh.govt.nz/meningococcal.