

Tackle Meningitis:

'How to' Guide



Campaign background

Tackle Meningitis is a campaign launched by GSK in partnership with former England Rugby player, Matt Dawson, aimed at **raising awareness of meningitis**, which is a rare but potentially fatal disease. The campaign is also backed by UK charities Meningitis Research Foundation and Meningitis Now.



Tackle Meningitis aims to **increase understanding** of the disease, its symptoms and the fact that there are different strains of meningitis which can affect both children and young people. By using the influence of sport and teamwork, the campaign aims to reach as many people as possible to raise awareness of existing information and materials that can be used to help spot suspected cases of meningitis.



The campaign was launched in September 2016 during **Meningitis Awareness Week**, with support from both UK charities. A survey was conducted last November aimed at finding out how much parents knew about meningitis and highlighting any gaps in information. The survey uncovered some worrying findings; most notably, **more than a third of UK parents wrongly believe a rash is the first symptom of meningitis**, when it often appears later, or not at all. The survey highlighted the need to raise awareness of the disease amongst parents across the country.

We are now inviting primary and secondary schools and other sports clubs across the UK to participate in the campaign by running a short onsite event for parents and children to **raise awareness** of the disease, its **symptoms** and **strains**, where to go for help and advice and the need to trust your instincts and act quickly if you suspect meningitis. We need your help to reach as many parents as possible.



We have prepared this toolkit of downloadable materials to guide you through the process, which is hosted on

www.tacklemeningitis.org



Matt Dawson has first-hand experience of meningitis after his two-year old son, Sami, contracted meningitis in February last year and remained critically ill on a life-support machine for two weeks afterwards. Sami subsequently recovered from the disease and Matt now wants parents and families to receive the **knowledge and education** that he feels he lacked.

"I wish I had known more about meningitis and what to look out for. People only think of the glass test, but there are other lesser known symptoms that it's very important to be aware of. In truth, I was fairly ignorant about how dangerous it can be, but thankfully we turned out to be incredibly lucky. With this disease, even a matter of minutes can make a huge difference to the outcome.

"I feel passionate about standing behind a campaign which uses the power and influence of sport and its ability to reach people of all ages. Together we can tackle meningitis to give families the best fighting chance against this devastating disease."

Matt Dawson

Getting involved in Tackle Meningitis

We recognise that organising standalone events during a busy school calendar can be a challenge! We would therefore recommend that you schedule the awareness event at a time when another parent/child meeting is taking place, so the Tackle Meningitis session can easily be fitted into an existing event.

We recommend the event should last no longer than half an hour, in order to maintain attention and ensure the message is delivered effectively.

On the website, you will find a simple set of downloadable materials to run the event. These are template materials which can be adapted and personalised for your use.

These include:

PRE-EVENT AIDS:

- A poster
- Paragraph to include in a newsletter/your existing parent communication channels
- Suggested social media

EVENT MATERIALS:

- Video with Matt Dawson raising awareness of symptoms and actions to take
- Quiz on symptoms
- Handouts for parents and children from the two leading meningitis charities, including where to go for more information and advice

POST-EVENT MATERIALS:

- Suggested social media

With your help, we can **raise awareness** amongst teachers, parents and family members across the country and **help save lives!**

Suggested flow of event

We have put together a suggested 30-minute agenda for the event, combining a **talk**, **video** and **interactive quiz**:



TIME	SESSION*
5 mins	Introduction and short talk by Headmaster/and or your school nurse
3 mins	Matt Dawson awareness video
10 mins	Slide deck quiz on symptoms
10 mins	Q&A session and leaflet handout (please source from Meningitis Now and Meningitis Research Foundation websites)

*Photos to be taken throughout the event, in line with the usual permissions requirements of each school. Potential to post on social media/school website/newsletter if permissions allow it.

Sharing the campaign

The aim of this campaign is to reach as many parents/teachers/young people/families as possible, to raise awareness of meningitis, its key symptoms, how to help prevent it, what to do if you suspect it and where to go for help and advice. We would therefore encourage you to share details of the event and what it hopes to achieve via social media to the school/parent community. When posting about the campaign, we would also ask that you use the hashtag **#tacklemeningitis**.

We have prepared some suggested **Facebook** and **Twitter** posts to share in the run up to the event, raising awareness amongst parents and the school community. There are also a few social media posts during and post-event, directing parents to key resources with information on the disease.

In addition to sharing the campaign on your social channels, you may also wish to consider inviting someone from your local paper to attend the event, to increase visibility of the campaign and ensure widespread meningitis awareness in your community. Alternatively, you could share details/photos of the event with the local paper's newsdesk by email.



Additional information

Should you have any further questions on any aspect of running this event, please contact nicola@sowhatglobal.com.

Appendix



Information on meningitis and septicaemia

Meningitis is the inflammation of the lining around the **brain and spinal cord** (meninges).¹ It can be very serious if not treated quickly, with the potential to cause **life-threatening blood poisoning** (septicaemia), permanent damage to the brain or nerves, loss of limbs and in some cases, death.¹ In the early stages of the disease it can be very difficult to tell meningitis and septicaemia apart from milder diseases, as they often resemble common viral illnesses.²

Symptoms of meningitis can develop rapidly. The first symptoms are usually fever, vomiting, headache and feeling unwell. **Limb pain, pale skin, and cold hands and feet** often appear earlier than the rash (which doesn't fade when a glass is rolled over it), **neck stiffness, dislike of bright lights** and **confusion**. Although a rash is often the most well-known symptom, it sometimes does not

appear at all and when it does, it is often a sign that the disease is advancing rapidly and it is therefore crucial not to wait for it to appear before seeking medical attention.

There are several types, or strains, of meningococcal bacteria with the main groups being A, B, C, W, X, Y and Z,³ and although group B meningococcal causes the majority of disease in the UK,⁴ all of the meningococcal bacteria strains can be fatal. Vaccines are available to protect against some of the strains, however, no single vaccine protects against all strains.⁵ To find out more about the vaccines available, speak to your local GP, nurse or pharmacist. Meningitis and septicaemia can kill in hours, making it vital to be aware of the symptoms and act accordingly.⁶ **If you suspect someone may have meningitis or septicaemia you need to trust your instincts and seek the nearest medical help immediately.³**

References

1. Meningitis Now. What is meningitis. <https://www.meningitisnow.org/meningitis-explained/what-meningitis/> Last accessed November 2017
2. Meningitis Research Foundation. Frequently asked questions. <http://www.meningitis.org/disease-info/faqs> Last accessed November 2017
3. Meningitis Research Foundation. Meningococcal meningitis and septicaemia <http://www.meningitis.org/disease-info/types-causes/meningoccal-disease> Last accessed November 2017
4. Meningitis Now. Meningococcal disease <https://www.meningitisnow.org/meningitis-explained/what-meningitis/types-and-causes/meningococcal-disease/> Last accessed November 2017
5. Meningitis Now. Bacterial meningitis <https://www.meningitisnow.org/meningitis-explained/what-meningitis/types-and-causes/bacterial-meningitis/> Last accessed November 2017
6. Meningitis Research Foundation. Meningitis symptoms <http://www.meningitis.org/symptoms> Last accessed November 2017