

BACTERIAL MENINGITIS AND SWINE FLU

THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE SYMPTOMS

At this time of year, flu is becoming more common and, even with swine flu, is usually not a severe disease. However, the symptoms of meningitis can superficially resemble those of flu, **so beware**.

Below is a brief summary of how these conditions can be differentiated. Remember that, at present, flu is very common and meningitis is very rare.

What Are Symptoms of Bacterial meningitis? [see table below]?

The symptoms of bacterial meningitis usually begin abruptly and rapidly worsen.

Often in cases of bacterial meningitis, a blotchy red rash can appear on the skin.

Unlike most other rashes, this rash will not fade or change colour when you place a glass against it.

However, the rash does not occur in all cases so you should not assume that an absence of a rash means that a diagnosis of meningitis can be ruled out.

What Are Symptoms of H1N1 (swine flu) [see table below]?

The symptoms of H1N1 (swine flu) are usually slower to manifest themselves.

Symptoms vary between individuals, however, they can be very similar to those of Bacterial meningitis.

Symptoms	Meningitis	H1N1
headache	✓ (severe)	✓ (mild)
fever	✓	✓
vomiting	✓	✓
drowsiness	✓	✗
confusion	✓	✗
seizure or fits	✓	✗
cannot tolerate bright lights	✓	✗
stiff neck	✓	✗
cough	✗	✓
sore throat	✗	✓
body aches	✓	✓
runny nose	✗	✓
congestion	✗	✓
fatigue	✗	✓

If you think you have flu or are worried about meningitis, inform your college nurse and ensure that a friend is also aware.

If you strongly suspect you have meningitis and not swine flu, **dial 999 and ask for an ambulance**.