

World Meningitis Day | 5th October 2025

Now is the time for action

Introduction

Meningitis is fast, ruthless and deadly. It can strike anyone, anywhere, at any time, taking a healthy life in just 24 hours. ⁽¹⁾

It moves so quickly that even those with access to medical care may not get the treatment they need. And for those who do survive, they face life-long disabilities, such as hearing loss, brain damage, limb loss or epilepsy, often requiring long-term care and support.

But meningitis is not unstoppable. With improved funding, greater access to vaccines, faster diagnostics and better treatment and support, we can save lives and protect futures. ^(1, 2)

That's why World Meningitis Day is a call to action. Founded by the Confederation of Meningitis Organisations and coordinated by the Meningitis Research Foundation, it is the world's largest day of collective action on meningitis. **It is the global moment to raise awareness of meningitis, inform and educate communities, and demand the healthcare improvements that will save lives.**

By coming together, we can make meningitis more preventable and treatable, so no one has to live with its devastating impact. As the World Health Organization's *Global Road Map to Defeat Meningitis by 2030* reaches its halfway point, now is the time for action.

Key messages

Protect: know what meningitis is

- Meningitis is deadly and debilitating. It can kill you within 24 hours ⁽¹⁾. If you suspect meningitis get medical help fast.
- Meningitis is a medical emergency. It causes swelling of the lining around the brain and spinal cord (the meninges) and is usually caused by a bacterial, fungal or viral infection ⁽²⁾.
- Across the world, there are around 2.3 million cases of meningitis every year. ⁽³⁾
- Bacterial meningitis is deadly: the World Health Organization estimates that around 1 in 6 people who get it will die. ⁽⁴⁾
- 1 in 5 meningitis survivors will live with life-long disabilities, including hearing loss, brain damage, limb loss and epilepsy. ⁽⁴⁾

- By getting vaccinated against meningitis (the safest and most effective protection for most causes) and knowing its signs and symptoms we can protect ourselves.
- Saving lives from meningitis directly protects people from pneumonia and sepsis. By defeating meningitis, we tackle three of the top ten causes of death in children under five. ⁽⁵⁾
- Making the World Health Organization's [*Global Road Map to Defeat Meningitis by 2030*](#) a reality will eliminate bacterial meningitis epidemics, reduce disability and save the lives of more than 920,000 people by 2030 ⁽⁵⁾.
- We have a [*Global Road Map to Defeat Meningitis*](#). In 2020, every World Health Organization member country agreed to implement it. 2025 marks the halfway point to the Road Map's goal of defeating meningitis by 2030. It's time for governments to [*honour their commitment*](#) to protecting and saving lives from this deadly and debilitating disease.

Support: action is needed now

- Meningitis has far-reaching consequences, including bereavement, disability and mental health challenges. ⁽⁶⁾
- For many people across the world there is no healthcare follow-up after meningitis, stopping life-long disabilities being identified and supported. ⁽⁵⁾
- Meningitis leaves people with disabilities that last a lifetime, including hearing loss, limb loss, scarring and kidney damage. Without action now, 400,000 more people will be left with a life-changing disability caused by meningitis in 2030 alone. ^(5, 6)
- Meningitis causes learning and intellectual disabilities, including memory loss, lack of concentration and issues with thinking and problem-solving. ⁽⁶⁾
- Meningitis has health, economic and social consequences. It affects the lives of those who survive and those that look after them, impacting their ability to go to school, have a career, earn an income and live independently. ⁽⁵⁾
- All over the world, families are left to deal with the costs and consequences of meningitis on their own, with little or no support. This must change. ⁽⁵⁾
- By listening to the experiences of those who know what living with meningitis is like, we will increase knowledge and understanding. This helps us develop better ways to prevent, treat and care for people affected by meningitis all over the world.
- Analysis of 2022 global funding on research into meningitis shows that less than 1% was spent on the life-long impacts of the disease. This means vital breakthroughs on care and support are still not being identified. ⁽⁷⁾
- The World Health Organization's *Global Road Map to Defeat Meningitis by 2030* includes goals to increase access to care and support for people affected by

meningitis and their families. As we approach the halfway point to 2030, we must see action, investment and commitment to make this happen.

Defeat: we need a world free from meningitis

- The World Health Organization estimates that defeating meningitis by 2030 could create more than \$100 billion in economic benefits. By reducing cases, preventing deaths and limiting the life-changing disabilities caused by meningitis, we all gain. ⁽⁵⁾
- Defeating meningitis will reduce poverty, improve health and well-being, ensure people can stay in education, enhance people's ability to work and to live independently, and reduce inequality amongst communities and countries. It will positively impact six of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). ⁽⁵⁾
- The World Health Organization reports that by improving prevention, diagnosis and treatment for meningitis, we could save up to \$10 billion in direct healthcare costs by 2030. The solution is clear. Now we must act. ⁽⁵⁾
- Vaccines can prevent most causes of meningitis but success has been significantly slower than other diseases. In 2000 - 2021, meningitis deaths fell by 45%. This is about half the progress seen in preventing deaths from measles in the same period. ⁽³⁾
- The World Health Organization's *Global Road Map to Defeat Meningitis by 2030* commits every UN member state to developing its own national plan for defeating meningitis. We need our governments to stand by their commitments, so lives are saved now and in the future.
- We need stronger commitment and action from countries, global health organisations and donors. This is what will drive defeating meningitis, so millions of people can have a brighter, healthier future. Meningitis can be defeated; now is the time for action.
- This World Meningitis Day, we are spreading life-saving awareness of meningitis and its symptoms, calling for significant improvements to treatment and support, and demanding better access and availability of the vaccines that save lives.
- Five years on from the launch of the World Health Organization's *Global Road Map to Defeat Meningitis by 2030*, and with five years to go to 2030, now is the time for action, funding and renewed commitment.

#DefeatMeningitis | #WorldMeningitisDay

How to take action this World Meningitis Day (5th October 2025)

Defeating meningitis starts with you. This is how you can show you believe in a world free from meningitis:

1. Speak up to save a life

Help spread life-saving awareness of meningitis by sharing any of the free resources from our toolkit, using #WorldMeningitisDay or #DefeatMeningitis.

In 2024, over 1.7 billion people in 135 countries were reached with life-saving information on meningitis. Be part of the global movement demanding change in 2025.

2. Tell your story, your way

If you have been affected by meningitis, share your story. This helps people to know they are not alone in facing a meningitis diagnosis, alongside supporting health leaders across the world to understand the real and long-lasting impact of the disease.

Add your voice to the [world's largest digital collection of meningitis experiences](#), becoming one of the 2,030 people sharing their story in support of defeating meningitis by 2030. Together, we are making sure meningitis cannot be ignored.

3. Light the road ahead

Wherever you are in the world, join the millions of people who will illuminate something on the 5th October at 20:30 (8.30pm). Share your 'light the road ahead' moment on social media using #WorldMeningitisDay or #DefeatMeningitis.

This simple action means that, across the world, we are remembering everyone whose lives have been changed forever because of meningitis, alongside showing our hope for a world free from this devastating disease.

World Meningitis Day is coordinated by the world's leading meningitis charity, Meningitis Research Foundation. The Day was pioneered by people whose lives had been deeply affected by meningitis and who wanted to ensure no one else experienced the devastating effects of a meningitis diagnosis alone – members of the Confederation of Meningitis Organisations (CoMO). CoMO is now the global member network of Meningitis Research Foundation and is a growing and vibrant force for change, with members operating in over 60 countries across the world.