

Two die, including university student, in 'invasive' meningitis outbreak

Eleven more have fallen ill around Canterbury. The UK Health Security Agency is providing antibiotics to some students in the area.

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Sky's Thomas Moore explains why the outbreak is so worrying



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Two people have died during an outbreak of meningitis in the Canterbury area of Kent.

In a statement, the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) said 11 other people had fallen ill with signs of symptoms of **meningitis** and septicaemia.

All cases were discovered in the past two days and one of those who died was a student at the University of Kent.

Antibiotics are being arranged for some students in the area, the agency said.



Some students across Canterbury have been given antibiotics by the UK Health and Security Agency

The statement went on: "UKHSA and the University of Kent are issuing advice to staff and students.

"Specialists at the UKHSA are interviewing affected individuals and their families to help identify all close contacts and arrange antibiotics to limit spread.

"Anyone becoming unwell with symptoms of meningitis and septicaemia, should seek medical help urgently at the closest Accident and Emergency Department or by dialling 999.

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"Early treatment can be lifesaving."

The specific strain has not been identified at present.

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The UKHSA said "very occasionally" meningococcal bacteria can cause serious illness, including inflammation of the lining of the brain and blood poisoning, which can rapidly lead to sepsis.

Anyone can get meningitis but it is most common in babies, children, teenagers and young adults, and it can spread quickly in places such as universities and colleges.

HERE ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF MENINGITIS TO LOOK OUT FOR

- A high temperature
- Cold hands and feet
- Vomiting
- Confusion
- Breathing quickly
- Muscle and joint pain
- Pale, mottled or blotchy skin
- Spots or a rash
- Headache
- Stiff neck
- Dislike of bright lights
- Being sleepy or difficult to wake
- Fits or seizures

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The University of Kent confirmed that one of their students had died in a post on social media.

A statement from the university said: "We are deeply saddened to confirm that one student from the University of Kent has died following a case of invasive meningitis.

"Our thoughts are with the student's family, friends and the wider university community at this extremely difficult time.

"The safety of our students and staff remains our highest priority.

"We are working closely with public health teams and are in touch with staff and students to ensure they get the advice and support they need."

The university later said that "in light of the developing situation", there would be "no in-person assessments this week" although its campuses would remain open.

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Canterbury MP Rosie Duffield posted to social media: "Rumours have been flying around for a few days, but you always hope for better news to come.

"Thinking very much of those who loved these students."

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