PRESS RELEASE
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2 IN 3 MUMSNET PARENTS CAN’T AFFORD MENINGITIS VACCINE

Only one in three parents can afford a new lifesaving meningitis vaccine for their children, according to a new survey.

Yet 95% are in favour of vaccines that protect against meningitis being offered free to all children through the NHS.

Results showed that 30% more people from London and the South East, compared with the rest of the country, said they could afford the vaccine, which can cost up to £600 per child – a figure supported by the fact that over 64% of private vaccine sales to date are in London and the South East.

The survey of 1,000 Mumsnet parents was commissioned by national charity Meningitis Now.

Sue Davie, chief executive of Meningitis Now, said: “The mothers who took part in this survey are sending a very clear message – that Government should act now to protect our babies and children, put their lives before cost and introduce the Meningitis B vaccine free on the NHS.”

The vaccine, Bexsero, is currently only available privately in the UK. Meningitis Now is spearheading the Beat it Now! campaign to make it available free on the NHS and recently delivered a 36,500-signature petition to Health Secretary Jeremy Hunt.

“We’d like any parents who haven’t signed up to our Beat it Now! campaign to join us and write to the Health Secretary, urging him to protect our children now”, Sue Davie added.

Mr Hunt is expected to consider a recommendation from the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) later this month and reach a decision on whether to introduce the vaccine.

Other headline findings from the survey show:

- Over nine out of ten mums (98%) said new parents should be given information about the signs and symptoms of meningitis.
- Less than half (47%) received this information when their child was born.
- A Signs and Symptoms card, as already produced by Meningitis Now, was overwhelmingly seen as the most appealing format in which to receive this information.

Justine Roberts, Mumsnet CEO, said: “Many parents are alert to the very real threat of meningitis but lots still aren’t receiving the right information at the right time. The message is clear: parents want to be given information about the signs and symptoms of meningitis when their children are newborns, not later on.”
For more information on meningitis and how to support Meningitis Now’s Beat it Now! vaccine campaign visit [www.meningitisnow.org](http://www.meningitisnow.org)

**Ends**

**Editors Notes:**

1,008 Mumsnet users completed an online survey via the MN Insight Panel. All respondents had at least one child. Survey dates: 17 – 25 February 2014. Data has not been weighted. An incentive of a £150 M&S voucher was offered.

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### Meningitis and Septicaemia Facts

- Meningitis is usually caused by bacteria or viruses
- Meningitis is inflammation of the membranes that surround and protect the brain and spinal cord
- Septicaemia is blood poisoning
- Some bacteria that cause meningitis also cause septicaemia
- Meningitis and septicaemia often happen together – it is vital to know all the signs and symptoms
- The early signs and symptoms of meningitis and septicaemia can be similar to flu and include fever, headache, nausea, vomiting and muscle pain.
- The more specific signs and symptoms include fever with cold hands and feet, drowsiness, confusion, pale blotchy skin, stiff neck, dislike of bright lights and a rash which doesn’t fade under pressure.
- In babies, symptoms can also include being floppy and unresponsive, dislike of being handled, rapid breathing, an unusual, moaning cry and a bulging fontanelle (soft spot on the top of the head).
- There are an estimated 3,400 cases of bacterial meningitis and septicaemia each year in the UK.
- Following bacterial meningitis or septicaemia, one in ten people will die and at least a third of survivors will be left with lifelong after-effects such as hearing loss, epilepsy, limb loss or learning difficulties
- Meningitis and septicaemia can affect anyone, of any age, at any time. However, babies and young children are most at risk, and young people between 15 – 24 years are also a higher risk group.
- In the past 20 years, effective vaccines have been developed to give protection against SOME types of meningitis. These are offered to all babies and young children as part of the UK childhood immunisation programme. BUT there are not vaccines to protect against ALL types.
- In January 2013, a vaccine to protect against meningococcal group B disease, the most common cause of bacterial meningitis and septicaemia, was licensed for use in Europe. This vaccine has not yet been recommended for routine use in the UK.
- If you suspect someone may be ill with meningitis or septicaemia, trust your instincts
About Meningitis Now

Meningitis Now, the UK’s largest charity fighting the disease, formed after Meningitis UK and Meningitis Trust merged in April 2013.

The newly united charity, with around 30 years’ experience, shares its predecessors goals – saving lives and rebuilding futures – through research, awareness and support.

Meningitis Now is working so no UK person dies of the disease and everyone affected receives the support needed to rebuild their lives.

Meningitis Now fights the disease on all fronts by providing a powerful, united voice for people fighting meningitis.

- Saving lives by funding vaccine and preventative research.
- Reducing the disease’s impact through awareness.
- Rebuilding futures with dedicated support.
- Fundraising to deliver our plans.

About Mumsnet

Mumsnet is the UK’s largest network for parents, with over 60 million page views and over 10 million visits per month. It has 180 local sites, as well as a network of over 4,200 bloggers. It regularly campaigns on issues such as miscarriage care, rape and sexual assault and freedom of speech on the internet.