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Meningitis: Warning sign check list

Meningitis is caused by a bacterium that attacks the brain coverings. The specific bacterium that has caused these tragedies in JHB is called *meningococcus* and it has some very specific symptoms.

According to the Neurologist at The Headache Clinic Dr Manney Orelowitz “Severe headache accompanied by fever is a definite cause for concern. When this is combined with stiffness in the neck that prevents the patient from bending their head forward or causes severe pain, there are alarm bells ringing and immediate action should be taken to avoid tragedy”

“Another big red flag is a rash on the skin” stated Dr Orelowitz. “If you add this to the headache, the fever, and the neck stiffness, the patient is almost certainly suffering from meningitis and may be in serious and imminent danger.” Other symptoms are flu-like and include sore throat, nausea, and sensitivity to light.

The bacterium is droplet spread from person to person, much like a flu or cold. To put the risk of contagion into perspective, the Nigerian Minister of Health reported yesterday that more than 300 Nigerians had died from the condition in an outbreak in that country in the last three months.

“Immediate medical attention, preferably in a hospital or specialist unit, is imperative” concluded Dr Orelowitz.

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