





# Why defeating meningitis matters



Meningitis affects people all over the world every day.

It is largely preventable, but people still die in less than 24 hours.

This is why we must act now to defeat meningitis.

**“ When my daughter died, I died.  
Meningitis is a devastating  
disease, and no one should  
suffer from it. It’s vital to keep in  
mind it can happen to anyone. ”**

**Deidre Fredericks**, mother of Chelsea, founder of the Meningitis Association of South Africa and CoMO member.



# Meningitis: a medical emergency



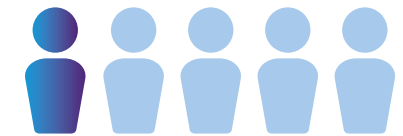
Did you know?

**Meningitis is the swelling of the lining around the brain and spinal cord (the meninges).**

It is usually caused by a bacterial, fungal or viral infection.



There are around **2.3 million cases** of meningitis worldwide every year.



**1 in 5 survivors** of bacterial meningitis will live with life-long disabilities.

Tragically, around 40% of all deaths from meningitis are in **children under five.**



Behind every statistic is a person and a story.



# World Meningitis Day

## Raising awareness to drive change

In 2009, our international member network, the Confederation of Meningitis Organisations (CoMO), founded World Meningitis Day to bring together a global community of people affected by meningitis. Over time it has grown – expanding its reach and impact to become the world's largest day of collective action on meningitis. Co-ordinated by Meningitis Research Foundation, World Meningitis Day is a crucial opportunity to raise awareness and advocate for change to save lives.



United Kingdom



Kenya



World Meningitis Day awareness activities organised by CoMO members include a doorstep awareness-raising initiative in Pakistan and discussions with staff and patients at Kenya's largest children's hospital. In the UK, Meningitis Research Foundation staff helped to light the road.

# Defeating meningitis by 2030

Working towards a milestone in the World Health Organization's Global Road Map

Meningitis is a largely preventable disease that impacts millions worldwide.

World Meningitis Day provides a crucial platform to raise awareness and mobilise action and support from funders and policymakers. Its importance has been recognised by its inclusion in the World Health Organization's (WHO) Global Road Map to Defeat Meningitis by 2030 – the first-ever global plan to defeat meningitis.

One of the key milestones outlined in the Road Map is to ensure the participation of at least 80% of member states on World Meningitis Day, which takes place on 5th October.

In 2024, 135 countries – over two-thirds of WHO member states – participated in World Meningitis Day, moving us closer to our target and **making it the biggest year to date.**

**Together, we can  
defeat meningitis.**

Join the global movement  
[worldmeningitisday.org](https://worldmeningitisday.org)





# World Meningitis Day

The creation of a global moment to save lives

**2009**

**CoMO members pioneer the very first World Meningitis Day** with members undertaking activities in 19 countries.



**2020**

**The WHO's Global Road Map to Defeat Meningitis by 2030 is approved by the World Health Assembly.**



**2021**

Momentum for World Meningitis Day builds, with 48 countries participating.

**2015**

Meningitis Research Foundation begin work with the World Health Organization (WHO) to support the development of **a global "road map" to defeat meningitis**, raising funds and supporting the first multilateral meeting.

**CoMO becomes a part of Meningitis Research Foundation**, creating the world's leading meningitis charity.

The WHO launches the Global Road Map, the first plan to defeat meningitis. **Meningitis Research Foundation** sit on the WHO-led implementation taskforce and are the only members whose sole focus is meningitis.



# World Meningitis Day

is now the world's largest day of collective action on meningitis.



## 2023

The number of countries participating in World Meningitis Day continues to grow, with **126 countries** taking action on the day.

**2022**  
Meningitis Research Foundation becomes the co-ordinator of World Meningitis Day, working with CoMO members across the world.

**A global movement is born:** 106 countries take action on World Meningitis Day – a 120% increase in country participation.

**2024**  
The WHO publishes its investment case for the Global Road Map to Defeat Meningitis by 2030, highlighting the need for **\$37.5 million for advocacy and engagement.**



Funded by Meningitis Research Foundation, CoMO launches the **very first advocacy fund for World Meningitis Day** to help members do more than ever before.

**135 countries** participate in World Meningitis Day – more than two-thirds of WHO member states – making **2024 the most successful year to date.**





# United in the race to defeat meningitis

## Answering the call for global action



World Meningitis Day is the global day of action. Every year since 2009, a growing number of people have come together from all over the world to raise awareness of the impact of meningitis and the investment and political support needed to defeat it.

### Sharing stories to save lives

Sharing meningitis experiences can change lives. Every year, people share their stories to raise awareness and foster a greater understanding of this complex and potentially deadly disease.

**We want to collect 2,030 stories for 2030 in support of the Global Road Map.**

By creating the world's largest digital collection of meningitis experiences, we aim to help global leaders understand its true impact and connect those affected, ensuring no one ever feels alone.



“ Even with all the positives we have had, no one ever wants to go through meningitis. What we went through – the amputation day ... that first night was by far the worst 24 hours I could have ever lived. We were within seconds of a horrendous ending, and you just don't want anybody to have to suffer that. That's why we must defeat meningitis. ”

– **Paul Challis**, father of Paralympic gold medallist, Ellie Challis.



## Spreading life-saving awareness

From campaign messaging, logos and email banners to social media resources and printables – people all over the world took advantage of **more than 200 free resources in four different languages in our campaign toolkit**. Together, they helped make others aware of the threat and drew global attention to the need to defeat meningitis, so future generations are protected.



### Empowering change with the campaign toolkit:

Free resources downloaded over 21,000 times in 100 countries.

Now used to raise awareness by advocates all year round.

### 2024 was the most successful toolkit to date:

Almost a **30% increase** in the number of countries using the toolkit.

**More than double** the number of downloads in comparison to 2023.

“At the end of the day, I’m happy to be alive. I was told multiple times when I was in hospital that I was lucky to come through it.”

– Earl Falconer, UB40 bassist.



@Radskipphoto



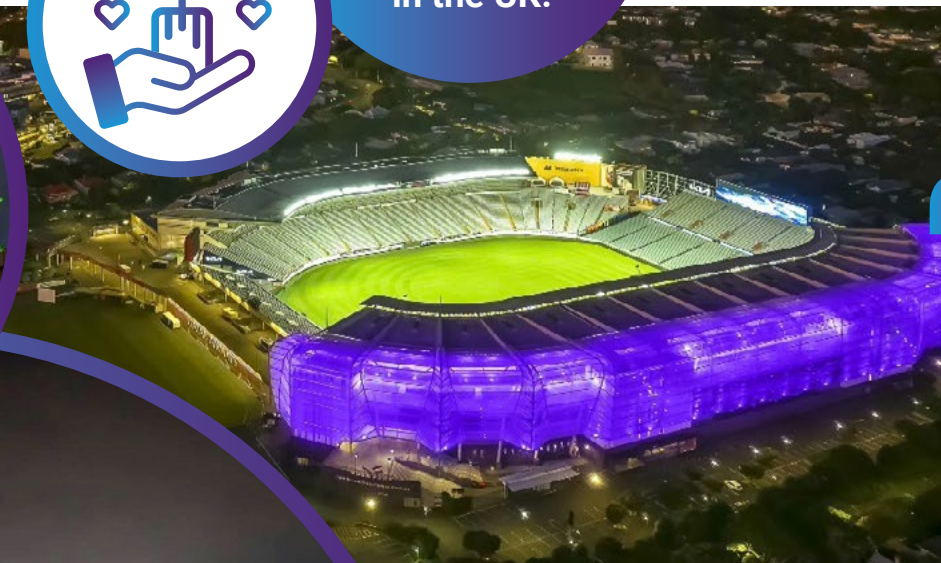
“One minute you’re working doing your normal things, within less than 24 hours you’re fighting for your life.”

– Juttima Chinnasri, model and social media influencer.

## Lighting the road ahead

On World Meningitis Day, people all over the world came together at 20:30 (8:30pm) to light up the night in remembrance of those whose lives have been affected by meningitis. We stood united in hope for a future where this disease is defeated.

**381**  
illuminations  
around the world,  
including 25  
in the UK.



## Making a difference in whatever way you can



There are many powerful ways to raise awareness, and you can get involved in World Meningitis Day in any way you like.

This year, the response was extraordinary – with support from global health organisations, governments and international institutions including the World Health Organization, the United Nations, the NHS, the French Ministry of Health, Médecins Sans Frontières, MSD, the Spanish Senate, Nigeria Rivers State Ministry of Health, Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, UNICEF, Sanofi, PATH, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, GSK and the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention.

“**‘The limits are just in our mind’ - Andrea Lanfri, an incredible athlete and a #meningitis survivor, told us earlier this year when President Emmanuel Macron gathered leaders to make commitments and pledges to #DefeatMeningitis.**

**On #WorldMeningitisDay, I remind leaders of Andrea’s wise words. Let’s stop this deadly and debilitating disease once and for all!**”

– LinkedIn post from **Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus**, Director-General of the World Health Organization.



## Supporting civil society across the world

The Confederation of Meningitis Organisations (CoMO) is the civil society network arm of Meningitis Research Foundation. We support our members all over the world by equipping them with the most effective tools and evidence for campaigning and advocacy, fostering collaboration and inspiring change.

**76 CoMO members in 37 countries made their voices heard on World Meningitis Day – a 52% increase in member engagement and a 28% increase in country participation**

- **90%** of members said World Meningitis Day helped them to **get people talking about meningitis**.
- **84%** said it increased **awareness of meningitis issues in their country**.
- **74%** said it made them **feel part of a global community**.



In 2024, our CoMO members did more than ever before.

### A meningitis documentary

The Spanish Association Against Meningitis produced a documentary about a meningitis outbreak in Galicia 50 years ago, highlighting its transformation into a region with the best vaccination program in Spain, coinciding with a new €3 million investment in MenB vaccines.

### Awareness-raising at a children's hospital in Kenya

The Meningitis Awareness Foundation collaborated with Kenya's largest children's hospital to host a meningitis awareness week, featuring a keynote presentation attended by over 150 staff and nursing students, highlighting the importance of professional development on meningitis.

### The first national plan to defeat meningitis in the Americas

The Brazilian government launched its first national strategic plan to combat meningitis in the Americas. A celebratory event on October 3rd featured WHO representatives and a compelling speech from Suelen Caroline Rosalino, President of the Brazilian Association for the Fight against Meningitis, who shared her family's experiences with the disease.



# Investing in advocacy to drive change



We invested **£20,000 in global advocacy projects** with the launch of our **first-ever World Meningitis Day Advocacy Fund**. Funding supported six innovative CoMO member projects to broaden their reach and amplify their impact.

**The World Meningitis Day  
Advocacy Fund**

## Ghana

Concern Health Education Project launched a national expert committee on meningitis, uniting health experts, NGO representatives and those affected.

Announced in partnership with the Ghanaian Ministry of Health, they reached millions through powerful radio broadcasts, boosting awareness nationwide.



## Côte d'Ivoire

The Centre Suisse de Recherches Scientifiques organised screenings of a compelling seven-part animation they had created about a young meningitis survivor.

Held at schools, and at a panel event for 140 people including government representatives and health professionals, the viewings raised awareness about the realities of meningitis in Côte d'Ivoire.





## Japan

The Japan Child Meningitis Organisation lit up the iconic Osaka Castle. They also engaged students at a local school in a lantern-making workshop. Uniting as a community, families affected by meningitis joined them to carry the lanterns around a rooftop track in a symbolic display of remembrance and hope. Their efforts to raise awareness were highlighted in a news segment on a regional television station.



## Nigeria

Care and Development Centre (CADEC) trained 22 Community Health Extension Workers and eight Surveillance Officers to raise awareness about meningitis within their communities and improve detection and referral rates.

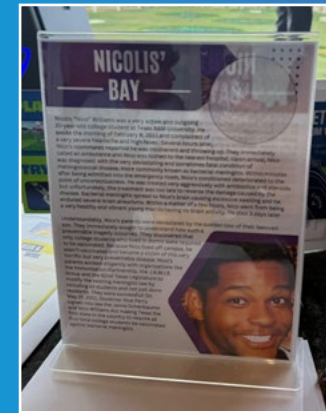
CADEC also shared crucial messages at marketplaces and supported a survivor's mother to tell her story on Nigerian local radio.



## Tanzania

Dr. Spensa'r Fulgence hosted a series of awareness-raising events at hospitals and schools. These reached more than 4,000 people including parents, journalists, council commissioners, healthcare professionals and meningitis survivors.

Promoted through local radio and press releases, these events fostered important community discussions on meningitis awareness.



## USA

Meningitis survivor John B. Grimes hosted a golf tournament to raise awareness of meningitis.

There were moving speeches and twelve stories of those affected displayed at the players' bays. These engaged participants on a personal level and highlighted the impact of the disease.

# Making an impact

## World Meningitis Day 2024 in numbers



**135 countries**  
took action on **World Meningitis Day**.



**381 buildings**  
illuminated around the world.

**100 countries**  
downloaded the  
**World Meningitis Day toolkit**,  
with its free resources on  
all aspects of meningitis  
awareness and prevention.

**What are the symptoms of meningitis and sepsis?**

Meningitis and sepsis are very serious infections which can kill in hours. Knowing the symptoms could save someone's life.

**Remember:**

- Symptoms can appear in any order.
- Not everyone gets all symptoms.
- Don't wait for a rash to appear: a very ill person needs medical help, even if there are only a few spots or no rash.
- Trust your instincts and always get medical help fast.

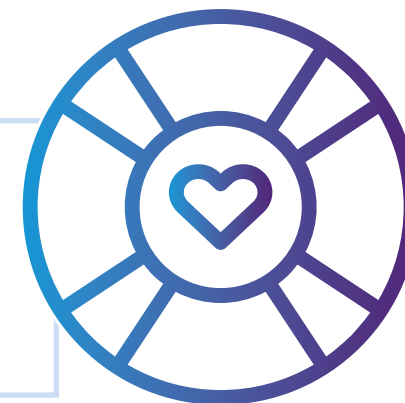
**Symptom checker**

**#DefeatMeningitis**

**meningitis.org**  
Helpline: UK 080 8800 3344 | Rol 1800 41 33 44

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\* Symptoms with \* are more specific to meningitis and sepsis and less common in other illnesses.  
The Floor, The Programme Building, The Priory, Bexley, Essex, SS15 2JG  
A charity registered in England and Wales (no. 1031126), in Scotland (no. SC0227086) and in Ireland (no. 20054506)

**1.7 billion**  
people were reached  
with **lifesaving information**.







## 38 million+ opportunities

to see, read and hear information about meningitis generated by the celebrity supporters who shared their stories in the media.



## 16 celebrities and social media influencers

supported World Meningitis Day, sharing their own meningitis experiences in Meningitis in your words and via their social media. **Together they reached over 1 million followers.**



This incredible achievement highlights the power of a collective voice and the dedication of an international community committed to defeating meningitis.

Join us, and with your support, we can drive change.

**Together, we can defeat meningitis.**

For more information and support, visit: [meningitis.org](https://meningitis.org)

#DefeatMeningitis

## Photo credits

### Front cover

- Niagara Falls, USA, lit up for World Meningitis Day by The American Society for Meningitis Prevention.  
*Photo credit: Niagara Parks*
- Staff members and an ambassador of the Brazilian Association for the Fight against Meningitis, in front of the National Congress, lit up for World Meningitis Day.
- Meningitis Research Foundation ambassadors, Dawn and David Canham, hosting an awareness stand at a Freshers Fair at the University of Leicester.
- Participants in the World Meningitis Day event in Osaka, organised by the Japan Child Meningitis Organisation, pose with lanterns.
- Meningitis Research Foundation ambassador Fliss Shilling's contribution to light the road with flowers in a vase decorated with lights.
- Staff members from Centre Suisse de Recherches Scientifiques en Côte d'Ivoire speaking at a school screening of an educational cartoon.  
*Photo credit: African Science Communications Agency.*
- Staff from Meningitis Research Foundation helping to light the road with tea lights in Bristol.
- Middlesbrough Town Hall lit by Middlesbrough Council to mark World Meningitis Day.

### Back cover

- Cardiff Castle illuminated to mark World Meningitis Day.
- Osaka Castle, lit up for World Meningitis Day by the Japan Child Meningitis Organisation.
- CoMO member, survivor and meningitis advocate John B. Grimes in his studio.
- Canada Place, Vancouver, Canada, lit up for World Meningitis Day by Meningitis Foundation Canada.

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