

bacterial meningitis

Recommendation 1.4.1

Why the committee made the recommendation

As suspected bacterial meningitis is a medical emergency, the committee agreed (based on their knowledge and experience) that a senior clinical decision maker should perform an initial assessment and ensure that investigations are done promptly. This will prevent unnecessary delays to the first dose of antibiotics (if this was not given before arrival at hospital).

How the recommendation might affect practice

Hospitals may need to streamline their processes so that blood tests can be done within the 1-hour timeframe for giving antibiotics.

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Bacterial throat swabs and blood tests for bacterial meningitis

Recommendations 1.4.3 to 1.4.5

Why the committee made the recommendations

A bacterial throat swab can provide information about the strain of *Neisseria meningitidis*. The Public Health England guidance on managing meningococcal disease recommends taking a bacterial throat swab for suspected meningococcal disease to provide information about the infecting strain, to guide management of cases, contacts and outbreaks. The committee extended this to people with suspected bacterial meningitis because *Neisseria meningitidis* is a potential cause of meningitis.

All of the evidence was based on individual blood tests and the committee agreed that none of these blood tests alone would be sufficient to make a diagnosis of bacterial meningitis, nor should any of these tests be used to rule out bacterial meningitis. However, blood tests are an important tool for gathering information to inform the diagnosis, when