

RISK ASSESSMENT

LETTINGS / HIRING OF CHURCH ROOMS

Name of Church	Assessment undertaken by
WOODBIDGE METHODIST CHURCH ST JOHN'S STREET WOODBIDGE SUFFOLK IP12 1ED	M.J. PORTER - SAFETY ADVISOR Contact at:- WMCroombooking@gmail.com
Initial Assessment 7/7/2020 This Update 31/3/2026	Area of the building assessed ALL: - SANCTUARY; OCTAGON; KITCHEN; WESLEY ROOM; TOILETS; VESTRY; STEWARDS' OFFICE; ENTRANCE FOYER; UPPER ROOM(S); STAIRS, LIFT AND CORRIDORS, STORAGE.
Next Assessment Review Date: 1 January 2027	

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Hirers should view and check the most recent version of this document on the church website (<https://woodbridge.methodistic.org.uk>)

SAFEGUARDING POLICY

THIS SHOULD BE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT WHEN HIRING OR USING CHURCH PREMISES MORE DETAILS ARE AVAILABLE ON THE CHURCH WEBSITE:-

<https://woodbridge.methodistic.org.uk>

COVID-19: E-Coli: Influenza and other possible similar types of infection - Actions and Control

Woodbridge Methodist Church (hereafter referred to as 'WMC') will try to pass on up-to-date information and advice, but all Hirers are reminded that they too need to keep abreast of changes in order to protect people attending their groups and others. We all need to be aware that situations may change or be suddenly updated and to comply with any requirements imposed and act upon recommendations made.

There are many known risks associated with the spread of various forms of Covid, Influenza, Meningitis and E- Coli. There are also many unknown or changing factors about the spread and severity of these and similar, or less well-known, or even as yet unknown infections, especially as we now know how they are capable of rapidly changing their 'infection patterns'. The Church and its users all need to monitor our procedures to keep each other as safe as possible from these infections. Government advice has all but ceased since the peak of the Covid pandemic, but we have learned from that experience and realise we may have to take new (or old) precautions and to follow rapidly-changing NHS or Government guidance, if and when they decide to issue any. Sometimes this advice and information may be given at very short notice. We all need to keep updated on the emergence and progress of these new or changing diseases and their associated modes of transmission.

At the end of May 2025, the World Health Organisation (WHO) issued an alert over a 'new' strain of Covid – NB.1.8.1 which whilst not appearing to be any more lethal, spread even more easily than the previous Omicron variants. It was first detected in July 2024 and a rapidly growing number of people who caught the infection were hospitalised and many died, prompting the WHO caution. Some authorities have given this strain the name 'Nimbus'. A similar 'new' variant has recently been called 'Stratus': 3 sub-variants of it – XFG, XFG-2 and XFG3; have been reported to have a characteristic symptom of a change in the voice where it becomes raspy, hoarse or scratchy.

A recent outbreak of Bacterial Meningitis has brought attention to the problems of distinguishing infections that have similar symptoms and are often spread in a similar way as colds/flu - cough/sneeze/close contact. Symptoms in the early stages may develop very quickly and in the case of Invasive Bacterial Meningitis (where the causative agent gets into the bloodstream / brain) urgent medical attention is essential as there is a **fatality rate of about 10%** where the condition is not identified or treated quickly. There is also a viral form of Meningitis which is usually less severe. With many of these infections, it is very difficult to distinguish from the early symptoms. Some general guidance is included at the end of this document but it is always better to check early – using the 111 NHS process or 999 in emergencies. Of course, this also happens with other 'cold-like' infections so is not totally diagnostic. Other symptoms may include the more familiar fever, fatigue, sore throat, mild cough, nasal congestion, muscle aches and sometimes gastro-intestinal problems, including – abdominal pain, bloating, nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea, constipation and / or gastro-oesophageal-reflux (heartburn). These new

variants are also even easier to spread to the extent that they are responsible for about a quarter of all worldwide cases! It appears to be able to overcome previous immunity built up by vaccines and infections and also seems to be able to spread significantly earlier and easier.

The H5N1 strain of 'Bird Flu' that began to affect birds in 2021, spread rapidly all over the world, causing devastation to wild birds and farm poultry alike. In 2025, the number of bird flu cases in the UK seemed to reduce – but then the downward trend reversed dramatically (typical of what happens when virus develop and change/mutate) and the variants we are now seeing, display clear signs of becoming the most infectious version ever recorded. The risk of this infection passing from wild or domestic birds to people is again high and likely to remain so for the foreseeable future.

Towards the end of 2025, there were 7 significant mutations in the H3N2 seasonal **human** influenza virus and they have already caused increases in transmission and seriousness of the infections. The Government recommended a rapid uptake in vaccinations against this seasonal human flu but the number of cases still grew rapidly.

Where a person suffering from human influenza comes into contact with the Bird flu virus, there is a significant possibility of the two, related organisms creating a completely 'new' flu virus, amalgamating the characteristics of both viruses. A newly created virus could easily result in very high mortality rates and/or easier transmissions between humans and very quickly we could be facing another Pandemic.

We believe that it is important where anyone is ill with Covid, or 'general' flu-like symptoms, they should stay at home, avoiding as much contact with other people as far as is reasonably possible **and follow the current NHS advice** on distinguishing between and acting upon any such infections. It is also recommended that (as in previous advice for Covid) that face coverings should be worn where appropriate. This is particularly important if the contact is with groups where there are vulnerable people who could be more susceptible to adverse reactions from any such infections.

Meeting indoors, especially in crowded situations, where there is poor ventilation, or where people are together for long periods of time, are examples of situations where infections can be easily passed on. Woodbridge Methodist Church encourages all users of the premises to maintain good ventilation by opening windows and doors as appropriate and not to overcrowd any room.

We feel there is still a need to take basic precautions when in crowded situations. **and employ the above suggested 'good practice' at all times.**

<u>CONTACT Hazards/Risks</u>	Additional Covid-19 and similar infectious conditions: Controls – Reducing Risk	Action Plan												
NUMBERS USING ROOMS	The maximum number of people permitted in the following rooms are:- <table><tr><td>Sanctuary</td><td>150</td></tr><tr><td>Octagon</td><td>100</td></tr><tr><td>Upstairs Room</td><td>30</td></tr><tr><td>Vestry</td><td>6</td></tr><tr><td>The Wesley Room</td><td>10</td></tr><tr><td>Kitchen</td><td>4</td></tr></table> Additional precautions will need to be assessed by each individual Hirer / User regarding the activity being undertaken and including any additional factors. It may be necessary to reduce the maximum numbers given above for any room. If you need more space for your function, please discuss this with us at the earliest opportunity.	Sanctuary	150	Octagon	100	Upstairs Room	30	Vestry	6	The Wesley Room	10	Kitchen	4	If Influenza, or any similarly transmittable disease, does become widespread, the Church recommend reviewing these permitted numbers. It is anticipated that they would initially need to be reduced by half. Such changes may need to be introduced at short notice, even before Government advice is released! If action becomes necessary, we will initially look to invoking controls – including the possible closing down or limiting use of facilities or activities.
Sanctuary	150													
Octagon	100													
Upstairs Room	30													
Vestry	6													
The Wesley Room	10													
Kitchen	4													
VENTILATION AND HEATING	With the exception of The Sanctuary, all rooms are able to be well ventilated using opening windows and doors. Most, rooms are adequately ventilated without opening windows or doors, however, if the numbers present, or the use to which the room is put, are likely to increase the transmission risk, additional ventilation will need to be considered and if necessary, implemented. If additional ventilation is needed in the Sanctuary, some or all of the following actions will help to increase ventilation, sufficient for most purposes :- • The door between the Sanctuary Balcony and the First Floor Rooms be opened in conjunction with windows in those Rooms. • The door from the Sanctuary to the Wesley Room and also the door from the Wesley Room to the rear corridor should be left open.	Hirers and users are asked to ventilate the room(s) they occupy using doors and windows as appropriate, either continuously or, if that compromises other needs (e.g. temperature) a period of thorough ventilation should be done before and after the session and on an intermittent, regular basis during the session as appropriate.												

CLEANING	• the external double sliding doors at the front of the Church are opened in conjunction with the door under the screen communicating with the Sanctuary • In all rooms, during cold weather, windows and/or doors may be opened for short, regular periods to increase ventilation commensurate with heating needs and numbers of people present: this may be done before, during and/or after use of the room as appropriate. • The ceiling mounted fans may assist in air movement. The controls are kept near the light switches adjacent to the double-entrance doors. Please ensure they are switched off after your session ends. If pressed 'hard', the control buttons sometimes stick in their 'sockets' rendering the unit unusable. Please free them gently then continue, returning them to their storage boxes. The Church is unable to clean and disinfect between every letting. The Church will arrange cleaning of rooms and common parts of the building on at least 3 days a week. Hirers will need to consider cleansing all surfaces they expect to come into contact with, in accordance with their own Risk Assessments.	
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GENERAL TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF HIRE

Woodbridge Methodist Church St Johns Street Woodbridge Suffolk IP12 1ED

**Information and Agreement for Groups and Organisations using the Premises
from May 2026.**

- **Welcome to Woodbridge Methodist Church (WMC). We hope that your time spent on the premises is successful. Please ensure you read and agree to the following before making a booking. Making the booking indicates your acceptance of all these terms and conditions. Please ask about any point that you wish to clarify before beginning the hire.**
- **The Church Council of Woodbridge Methodist Church (WMC) is responsible for the provision and maintenance of the church buildings. Contact is by the website - <https://woodbridge.methodistic.org.uk> or e-mail WMCroombooking@gmail.com**
- **The hirer shall at all times comply with all conditions and reminders shown in this document or communicated to them. This AGREEMENT is between the hirer and WMC only. Sub-letting to any other party is not permitted. Any organisational changes in the Hirer's personnel or management structures shall be notified to the Church immediately.**
- **Cancellations:- If a hire session is to be cancelled, at least 24 hours notice should be given by e-mail to WMCroombooking@gmail.com otherwise the Church reserve the right to charge for the hire-session period.**
- **Organisations hiring or using rooms at the church on a regular basis (more than 3 times per year) must have their activities covered by their own Public Liability Insurance with a minimum Limit of Indemnity of £1,000,000 (one million pounds). Evidence for this cover must be provided.**
- **Fire Safety and Health & Safety – The Hirer will need to Risk Assess the rooms they are hiring for Fire Safety and Health & Safety matters, according to the use they intend putting the facilities to. The Church will co-operate as much as they can with assisting the Hirer to do this and there are separate Safety and Fire Risk Assessment documents available to view on the website. These should be consulted regularly.**
- **The Church Council has a Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults Policy available to view on the website, and seeks to safeguard people of all ages, in particular to prevent any physical, sexual or emotional abuse of children, young people or vulnerable adults. Please take a look at this policy and sign below to indicate that you will comply with it fully when on church premises.**

- Smoking is not permitted anywhere within the premises.
- Alcohol, in any form, is not permitted on the premises at any time.
- Gambling is not permitted on the premises; an exception is made for raffles or games of chance with 'low-value' non-cash prizes held at bazaars, sales of work, fetes and similar events
- A Public Entertainment Licence is not usually required for the Church premises, but it is the hirer's responsibility to ensure that all necessary licences and consents are obtained if such licences are required for their activity.
- Toilet facilities are shared by all Hirers / Users
- Money (cash) shall not be left at the premises unless it is securely locked away. The Church are not responsible for valuables left at the premises.
- Use of the Main Kitchen facilities are generally shared between all users. If more intensive use is required, this should be discussed with the Church representative and be booked as a separate item, for which a fee is payable.
- After using the kitchen facilities, equipment used must be cleaned, dried and returned to the correct storage place. In particular, knives or similar sharp items must be placed out of sight in the appropriate drawer or cupboard.

ADDITIONAL CONDITIONS AND REMINDERS WHEN HIRING

a. A door key is available for all group leaders and a £20 cash deposit, to cover the cost of cutting a new key, is payable in advance. A safeguarding form will also need to be completed. The deposit will be returned to the group leader when the key is returned in good, working condition.

b. We do not charge hirers extra for heating and this is available throughout the building:

- In the main entrance Foyer, the Octagon and the Sanctuary, heaters are operated by using the 'EXTRA HOUR' function integral with the heater unit, or by using the wall-mounted push button controls sited close to each heater. These allow 1,2 and (on some heaters) 3 hours heating to be requested at a time. If needed, these requests can be repeated. Please use this facility sensibly and turn off heaters if they are still operating when you finish your session.
- Heating in all other rooms is from the central heating system (radiators) controlled by a timer linked to hire periods. Please contact the Church (wmcroombooking@gmail.com) if there are any problems with the heating system.
- *The heater to the right (as you go into the Octagon) now has a timer switch, linked to hiring times so the room should be warm when you arrive.*

c. Please leave the rooms used and the tables, chairs etc in a clean and tidy condition. If using the sanctuary, before you leave, please ensure all the chairs are restored to their original layout to comply with fire regulations. In the Sanctuary, please do not place 'armchairs' on the ends of any row - place them at least 1 chair in – this is because the projecting fastening brackets may cause injuries if people walk into them. Please check chairs are positioned correctly BEFORE commencing any hiring period and adjust them correctly before commencing your hire period.

If using stacking chairs the Octagon, please re-stack them in designated spaces. Each chair faces in the opposite direction to the chair below it in order to keep the stack 'vertical' – if chairs are all stacked the same way round, they 'lean' and may become unstable and fall over. Stacks of chairs must only be stacked to a MAXIMUM of 6 chairs high as indicated. This is to prevent the stack leaning, or damaging wall-mounted electrical socket boxes.

Hirers may use the vacuum cleaners that are available in the ground floor foyer cupboard or on 1st floor by the lift. Please return cleaning equipment to the correct storage point. If either kitchen has been used, please ensure that sinks and working surfaces are wiped clean and appliances are turned off.

d. At the end of your session **PLEASE ENSURE ALL HEATERS & LIGHTS ARE TURNED OFF** and that windows and doors are securely closed. The Octagon main light switches are situated on a multi-switch-panel in the Foyer and additional lights are operated by a pull cord inside The Octagon, by the double-doors.

e. The front main entrance door to the building has two locks. In normal use when there are people on the premises, these should be left unlocked. In cases of "Lone Working" OR IF YOU ARE WORKING WITH PEOPLE YOU ASSESS AS BEING VULNERABLE IN ANY WAY the doors may be kept locked with the TOP locks alone being used. Please be aware of this when entering – someone may be surprised by, or surprise you, by a sudden appearance! You will also need to re-assess your means of escape in case of fire – there are at least 2 other escape routes beside the main doors, using 'crash-bars' on the outside doors. If you have used these doors for any reason, please ensure they are secured at the end of your session, assuming all has returned to 'normal'.

f. Before YOU, as keyholder or Hirer, vacate the building, make sure there is nobody left on the premises – for example, in the toilets or upstairs, then ensure that all lights and heating units are off, and **PLEASE ALSO CHECK THAT ALL TAPS ARE TURNED OFF IN THE KITCHENS AND TOILET AREAS.** When locking the double main foyer entrance doors, please ensure the two securing bolts on the second door (the one without the keyholes!) are locked shut (check by gentle pushing on the double doors which will part if not securely bolted). Please check with other users before locking the doors so they know they will need to lack them on leaving.

g. Hirers may enter the building and set up their room no more than 15 minutes before their booked hire time and must complete all activities and leave the building no later than 15 minutes after their booked time. The church does not charge for this setup or clear down

time, however, please ensure your booked hiring times reflect accurately your use of the premises.

h. The Church car park is available to church members and those hiring rooms on a first come first served basis. Please park sensibly with due regard to other users of the premises. Parking is offered only for the period of your hire time; (please don't go off shopping and deny the space to other legitimate users). All responsibility for any loss or damage when parked on the premises rests fully and solely with car owner & none with the church.

i. Any accidents or dangerous occurrences that happen on the premises are to be reported in the accident reporting book located in the hallway/kitchen area. Any incidents requiring immediate attention please use the Emergency contact list shown by the entry doors. All other incidents should also be reported by e-mail to:- WMCroombooking@gmail.com.

j. From time to time the Church and /or Octagon will be required for weddings, funerals and similar important church events. These will take priority over normal hiring. We shall endeavour to give as much notice as possible of these events to those hiring the premises and please discuss with us possible, alternative arrangements if necessary.

k. Our hire charges are reviewed each year (usually in September/October) and if appropriate, any increase is usually applied from 1 January the following year. A notice period of at least one month will be provided to all hirers about these increased charges which also appear on the Church Website :-

<https://woodbridge.methodistic.org.uk/>

l. Users may not leave any items relating to their activity in the hired rooms. A limited number of storage boxes have been organised for those groups using the premises on a regular basis. The church does not accept any responsibility for loss or damage to user items left in storage.

m. Notices advertising the hirer's activity may only be displayed on or around the premises prior to an event with prior consent of the Senior Steward. This is obtained by placing a sheet of up to A5 size in the folder marked for this purpose and situated on the top of the storage box area in the main entrance foyer. Stand-alone notices may only be used during the time when the hirer is using the premises and only after full permission has been requested and obtained. Requests may be left in the folder mentioned above or, send via e-mail to WMCroombooking@gmail.com

n. WiFi is usually available at the Church – to log on as “Guest” please use the password **w3Lcome2u**

o. Where a Hirer needs to comply with any Enforcement Authority's requirements, for example Food Hygiene Regulations, they shall discuss at the earliest possible opportunity, all matters fully and openly with the Church Representative to determine what action the Hirer is to take and what the Church is to take.

p. **DAMAGE** – Please report any damage to property or equipment, either discovered at the time of your visit or even if it occurred during your Hire period. We do not penalise accidental damage that has occurred during 'normal' use of the premises and would much prefer to know about it so it can be repaired or replaced as soon as possible.

I have read and I agree to abide by the terms and conditions in this document.

ORGANISATION NAME

(Hirer's Signature) (Date).....

(PrintName).....

(Address & phone).....

Nature of proposed use of premises.....

..... (If this involves children, young people or vulnerable adults, please give age range and number of adult helpers)

Email Address for invoices (Invoices will usually be sent by e-mail, monthly in arrears to the address given. Each invoice must be paid within 10 days of the issue date.

Name of church representative agreeing to this use of premises

.....Date.....

(Electronic applications the hirer must state in their e-mail that they have read and will comply with all of this document) All bookings and cancellations should be requested by e-mail to WMCroombooking@gmail.com indicating hirer or organisation name, dates, times and rooms required. Confirmation by e-mail will be provided to the requester. Cancelled bookings with less than 48 hours of advance notice may incur the normal charge. WMC retains the right to update these general terms & conditions to improve clarity, at any time.

FIRE SAFETY INFORMATION – Equipment available:-

Position		Type	Restrictions; For use on:-
Ground Floor			
Storage Area at Front of Sanctuary: (by electric cupboard)		Carbon dioxide CO ₂	Electrical
Corridor outside Wesley Room, bottom of stairs		Foam	Wood, paper, textiles Not electrical or oil/fat fires
Corridor outside Vestry		Carbon dioxide CO ₂	Electrical
Kitchen		Carbon dioxide CO ₂	Electrical
		Wet Chemical	Oil/fat fires
		Fire Blanket	Flammable liquids
Main entrance foyer		Water	Wood, paper, textiles Not electrical or oil/fat fires
Octagon		Water	Wood, paper, textiles Not electrical or oil/fat fires
First Floor			
Corridor top of stairs		Water	Wood, paper, textiles Not electrical or oil/fat fires
<u>Upper Room</u>	-	Carbon dioxide CO ₂	Electrical
		Fire Blanket	Flammable liquids
Sanctuary Sound Desk, Balcony		Carbon dioxide CO ₂	Electrical

SMOKE/HEAT DETECTORS

There are 7 smoke/heat detectors in the premises

FIRE ALARM BELLS/LIGHTS

There are 5 Fire Alarm bells / Lights in the premises **and they are audible in all rooms**

EMERGENCY LIGHTS

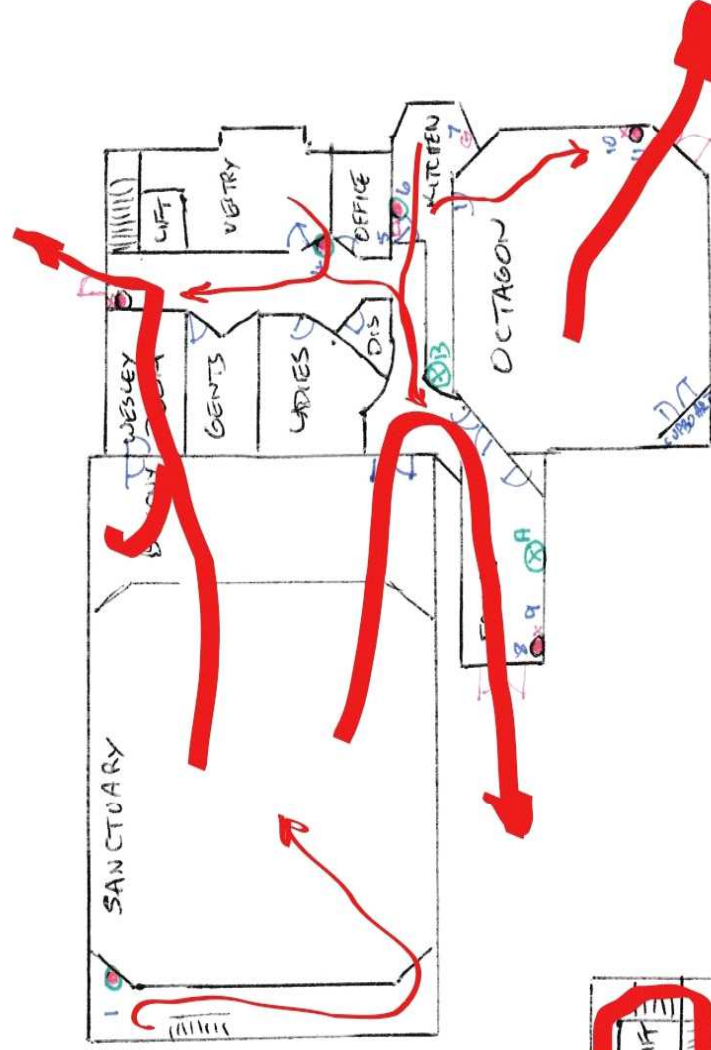
There are 13 Emergency Lights on Fire Escape Routes that automatically switch on if electric power fails.

FIRE ALARM SYSTEM

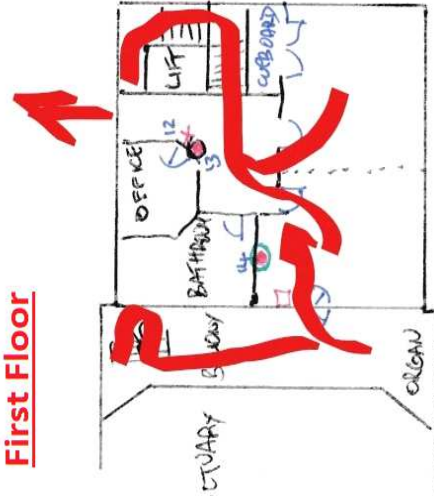
The fire Alarm and Emergency Lights systems are tested regularly and results are displayed in the foyer.

Fire Escape Routes

Ground Floor



First Floor



FIRE ESCAPE ROUTES

EMERGENCY CONTACT TELEPHONE NUMBERS

FOR ALL POLICE / FIRE / AMBULANCE <u>EMERGENCIES</u>	999
SUFFOLK POLICE - NON EMERGENCY	101
NHS NON-EMERGENCY OR ADVICE	111
FIRE SERVICES NON-EMERGENCY:-	
Monday to Thursday from 9am - 5pm AND	
Fridays from 9am - 4pm.	01473 260588
out of office hours	01480 444500
GAS LEAK – URGENT	0800 111 999
DANGEROUS ELECTRICAL SITUATION	0800 783 8838
SERIOUS MAINS WATER LEAK - ANGLIAN WATER	0800 771 881

**PLEASE NOTE THAT THE FOLLOWING CONTACTS ARE VOLUNTEERS AND ARE
NOT ALWAYS AVAILABLE**

PROPERTY / LETTING /SAFETY:	e-mail contact :-	WMCroombooking@gmail.com
MINISTER:	REV SAUL TADZAUSHE	nmaminister@methodistic.org.uk
CHURCH STEWARDS:		wmcstewards@gmail.com
STANNAH LIFTS	(LIFT CURRENTLY NOT IN USE)	

GUIDE TO DISTINGUISH BETWEEN COLDS, INFLUENZA OR COVID 2025 (BBC)

<u>COLDS</u>	<u>INFLUENZA</u>	<u>COVID</u>	<u>BACTERIAL MENINGITIS</u>
Symptoms appear gradually	Symptoms come on suddenly	Typical Flu symptoms	Symptoms can come on very rapidly and may appear in any order
Mostly affect nose & throat	Feel 'wiped out'	Loss of taste and/or smell	Fever, severe headaches sometimes vomiting Rash, stiff neck,
Early sign – pressure in ears	Fever, muscle aches	Diarrhoea or sickness may be present	Avoids bright lights Drowsiness,
Chestier, mucous cough	Dry Cough		Difficulty walking and/or co-ordinating
	Feel need to crawl into bed!		Collapse / seizures