

Infection Prevention and Control

Sepsis: information and awareness

What is sepsis?

Sepsis is when the body's immune system overreacts to an infection. The immune system usually helps fight off infection. The overreaction causes damage to the body's organs and tissues.

Sepsis was once called septicaemia or blood poisoning.

Sepsis is not rare, but it can be difficult to spot. Sepsis can move from a mild illness to a serious one very quickly. This is frightening for patients and their families.

Why does sepsis happen?

We do not yet understand why the body sometimes overreacts to infection and develops sepsis. Much research is being done to improve our knowledge.

Most cases of sepsis are caused by bacteria we meet every day that do not usually make us ill. Infection can start anywhere in the body, including:

- a urine infection
- a chest infection
- an infected cut or bite, or any wound



Patient Information

Who is at risk of getting sepsis?

Often people who develop sepsis are in good health and do not have any other conditions. However, you are more likely to develop sepsis if you:

- are very young or very old
- are a person who has diabetes
- are pregnant or have just given birth
- have had an organ transplant and are on anti-rejection medications
- have a serious illness or take medication which affects the immune system
- have an infection or complication after an operation
- are on long-term steroids or on medication to treat cancer (chemotherapy)

Why have you been given this leaflet?

You have been given this information to help you spot the signs of sepsis and tell you what to do if you think you may have it.

Spotting sepsis

A person with sepsis can get ill very quickly, so it is important to be familiar with sepsis symptoms.

If you or another adult develop any of these signs, seek medical help urgently:

Slurred speech or confusion

Extrême shivering or muscle pain

Passing little or no urine (in a day)

Severe breathlessness

It feels like you're going to die

Skin mottled or discoloured

Children can have different symptoms. Please ask one of our staff if you would like an information leaflet about this.

Patient Information

Sepsis can make blood pressure drop because arteries and veins become larger. This means blood has a bigger space to fill, so the body may struggle to keep blood pressure at a normal level.

- Your heart may try to help by beating faster.
- You may feel breathless or notice you are breathing more quickly.

Call 999 or go to A&E you think you or someone you look after has symptoms of sepsis.

Seek advice from a medical professional if you notice any of the symptoms listed in this leaflet. Call 111 and follow their instructions.

The Trust has access to interpreting and translation services. If you need this information in another language or format, please contact 024 7696 5132 and we will do our best to meet your needs.

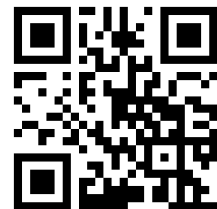
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