

## Maternity

# Sepsis during and after pregnancy

### What is sepsis?

Sepsis is a serious and possibly life-threatening condition. It happens when the body reacts to an infection, and vital organs (kidneys, liver, heart, liver, brain, lungs) are affected. Early treatment is crucial. It is uncommon, but it is important to recognise the symptoms and understand the risks and possible causes. Pregnancy affects the body's ability to fight infection; this can continue for 42 days after the pregnancy has ended.

### Symptoms of sepsis (infection with organ failure)

**S**lurred speech or confusion

**E**xtrême shivering or muscle pain

**P**assed no / very little urine in a day

**S**evere breathlessness

**I** "feel like I might die"

**S**kin mottled or discoloured

### What can cause an infection that may lead to Sepsis?

- A stitch used in the neck of the womb (cervix) to stop pregnancy loss.
- If "waters" / membrane sac broke early in pregnancy or were broken for longer than 24 hours.
- If the placenta or part of it remained inside the womb after birth
- If there has been close contact with someone who has Group A streptococcus.
- A pelvic infection, diagnosed during pregnancy.
- A recent sample of fluid taken from around the foetus.
- A urine infection.

## Patient Information

### **What makes women more at risk?**

- Being very overweight (obese)
- Diabetes
- Surgery within the last six weeks (including caesarean section)
- Having a weakened immune system
- Taking long term steroids
- Having, or recently had, treatment for cancer
- Heart, lung, liver and kidney disease (including conditions that you had pre- pregnancy)

### **Signs that you may have an infection**

- Abnormal bleeding from vagina, unpleasant smelling discharge or waters, lower tummy pain, diarrhoea.
- Feeling short of breath, pain on breathing, coughing up green or brown, blood-stained sputum.
- A wound that feels very painful, looks red, is swollen, is not healing, smells unpleasant.
- Pain in the lower back or side.
- Pain when passing urine, unpleasant smelling urine and passing less urine than usual, despite drinking plenty of fluids.
- A headache, neck stiffness, being unable to look at lights. Pain in the back after having an epidural or spinal pain relief.
- Pain, redness or, discharge from the place in your skin where a line or cannula was put in.

Painful, lumpy, hot and reddened breasts. **If you have any of the above, please contact us.**

### **How do we treat it?**

- We will look for the infection by taking samples of bloods and specimens, such as urine samples.
- We will give antibiotics and fluids as soon as possible. This may be through a cannula.
- We may put a tube(catheter) into your bladder to see how much urine you pass.
- We may give you oxygen with a face mask.
- We will transfer you to a specialist ward if your organs are affected.

## Patient Information

### If you had sepsis, what happens next?

Some patients can get symptoms up to 2 years after sepsis. The amount of time you spend in hospital because of the sepsis can affect this.

### Where can you get support?

**Sepsis Support Groups** are held across the country for those who have experienced sepsis, or relatives of those affected.

#### Details of support groups near you:

**Tel:** 0800 3896255

**Email:** [info@sepsistrust.org](mailto:info@sepsistrust.org)

**Web:** <https://sepsistrust.org?get-support/my-local-group/>

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.

The trust operates a smoke free policy.

### Did we get it right?

We would like you to tell us what you think about our services. This helps us to make further improvements and to recognise members of staff who provide a good service.

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[www.uhcw.nhs.uk/feedback](http://www.uhcw.nhs.uk/feedback)



#### Document History

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