

Sepsis Information Leaflet

Sepsis is a life-threatening condition triggered by infection that affects the function of the organs. It is treated most effectively if recognised early.

Signs & symptoms of infection:

Infections are often suspected when a person develops a temperature and feels unwell.

A high temperature is $> 38^{\circ}\text{C}$. A low temperature, $< 36^{\circ}\text{C}$, is also of concern but do check your technique.

Watch out for loved ones who have taken paracetamol as while it may lower the temperature it does not treat any underlying infection. Look for the other signs and symptoms of infection listed in the table.



Respiratory tract / lung infection		Cough with or without green sputum and you may or may not be breathless.
Abdominal Infection		Unexplained abdominal (tummy) pain with or without a swollen tummy. You may have worse pain when your tummy is pressed.
Urinary tract infection		Burning sensation on passing urine with intense urge, flank (side) pain may be present.
Genital tract infection		Lower tummy discomfort or pain with or without stinky discharge.
Skin		Pain, swelling, redness and hot to touch. There may be a pus or fluid ooze.
Bones and joints		Pain, swelling, redness and hot to touch. There may be a pus, fluid ooze or stiffness.
Brain & meningitis		Severe headache, neck stiffness, not able to tolerate bright lights. You may or may not have a rash. You may or may not be agitated or confused.
Device related (applies to materials in the body that are not a normal part of it e.g. medical tubes or metal work)		Pain, swelling, redness and hot to touch in the area of the device. There may be a pus or fluid ooze. <i>Examples are a cannula in your vein (for fluids or medicine like antibiotics), or a catheter (tube in your bladder to drain urine) which can cause infection. A cannula in your vein may cause redness, swelling and pain and/or pus at the point of entry to the vein. The catheter may cause a urinary tract infection (see above).</i>
Blood stream infection or blood poisoning		Severe nonspecific signs.
Exposure		Have any close contacts been very sick recently with similar symptoms? Has your loved one had a recent operation or infection? Are they known to have a multi-drug resistant bacteria (bug)? Have they recently travelled to tropical areas or to an area with an outbreak?



Sepsis Checklist:

Early identification and treatment saves lives in SEPSIS.

If your loved one has an infection or you suspect one, do the following checklist.

If any new symptoms are present and due to infection it could be sepsis.

Tick if applies	Part of the body affected	 Consider
<input type="checkbox"/>	Brain 	Are they acting themselves? Abnormal behaviour can range from mild agitation or confusion all the way to a coma. Are they too sick to communicate?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Breathing 	Is their breathing pattern very fast and laboured, for instance can they finish a sentence without a pause? Are their lips blue-tinged?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Circulation 	Is their heart racing very fast and are their hands and feet cold, clammy and pale? Do they get very dizzy when they try and stand or even sit up?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Kidneys 	Have they passed no urine in the past 12 hours and do not feel the need to go?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Clotting 	Do they have a new rash that does not disappear when pressed on by your finger or when a glass is rolled over it (glass test)?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Functional status 	Do they have a change in behaviour or performance? In some people with intellectual and/or physical disabilities it can be difficult to recognise these changes if you don't know them well. Young people may have severe leg pain and difficulty standing.

What to do

If signs of organ malfunction is present, even if the temperature is improved, **seek urgent medical review** (GP, GP out of hours or Local Emergency Department). Inform healthcare professionals what treatment has been given and let them know what's new from your checklist.

Ask COULD THIS BE SEPSIS?