

What is SEPSIS?

Whilst most women do not suffer from infection or sepsis during or after pregnancy, sepsis, if it occurs, is best treated when recognised early.

Sepsis is a condition that is triggered by an infection that causes the different organs of the body to start to malfunction (see the sepsis checklist for symptoms and signs of malfunction).

These symptoms can be caused by other conditions too, so while sepsis can be suspected it requires a medical review and blood tests with other investigations to be confirmed.

How common is SEPSIS?

In 2015, there were 65,904 pregnancies in Ireland, of these 8,336 women were either admitted with infection or diagnosed with infection as an inpatient, that is 12 in every 100 pregnancies. Only 308 were diagnosed with sepsis, so the incidence of sepsis was 1 in 214 pregnancies.

Where are the common places to get infections?

- Genital tract (sexual organs)
- Urinary tract (kidneys & bladder)
- Respiratory system
- Skin
- Intra-abdominal
- Catheter/device-related (medical tubes, devices and materials)
- Meningitis/encephalitis (the brain and its lining)
- Bones/joints
- Unknown (sometimes the site of infection, even when successfully treated, is never found)



Sepsis Checklist:

Early identification and treatment saves lives in SEPSIS.

If your loved one has an infection do the following checklist.

Part of the body affected	Consider	Concerning behaviour
Brain	Are they acting themselves?	Are they excessively sleepy, difficult to wake? Altered mental status can range from new mild agitation or confusion all the way to a coma. Are they too sick to communicate?
Breathing	Is their breathing pattern very fast and labored? Count over a minute if you can. If it is more than 30 tell the doctor or nurse.	Can they finish a sentence without a pause? Are their lips blue-tinged?
Circulation	Is their heart rate very fast or faster than usual? Count over one minute if you can. If it is more than 110 tell the doctor or nurse.	Is there good blood flow to their hands and feet or are they cold, clammy and pale? Do they get very dizzy when they try and stand or even sit up?
Kidney	Have they passed urine in the past 12 hours?	Do they need to go? If they have passed urine was it a normal colour or very dark and only a dribble. Are they too sick to tell you? (Review brain)
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?	Use the glass test. If the red rash does not disappear when pressed on tell your doctor or nurse
Functional status	Do they have a change in behavior? In some people with intellectual and/or physical disabilities it can be difficult to assess their wellbeing if you do not know them well.	Are they themselves? Are they performing all of their usual tasks? Is there anything in particular that is different from usual?
Exposure	Has anyone else been very sick recently with similar symptoms?	Has your loved one had a recent operation or infection or have they had a multi-resistant bug or recent travel? Has a household contact been sick recently?

What to do

If your loved one has an infection that is getting worse, look for the signs of sepsis and do the checklist.

If they have any of the signs or you are worried they are getting worse seek urgent medical assistance (GP, Maternity Unit, Local Emergency Department). Report the features that are abnormal from your checklist and ask.

COULD THIS BE SEPSIS?