

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, $\leq 35.5^{\circ}\text{C}$, 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.



Rigors	These are involuntary movements of the body that look a bit like seizures but are not associated with loss of consciousness. Rigors occur when the body temperature rapidly changes.
'Flu-like' illness	Many infections present with non-specific signs and symptoms including a high temperature, aches and pains, severe fatigue, and loss of appetite.
Respiratory Tract infection	Cough/green sputum and/or breathlessness
Intra-abdominal infection	Unexplained abdominal pain/distension associated with some 'flu-like' symptoms
Womb infection	Lower abdominal pain/discomfort that is constant, with or without unpleasant discharge and some 'flu-like' symptoms
Septicaemia or blood poisoning	Feeling very unwell often with vomiting and/or diarrhea and/or some 'flu-like' symptoms. Agitation and/or confusion are often present particularly in the older person. Young adults often complain of severe leg pain and are unable to stand or walk properly.
Cellulitis/skin or wound infection	Painful, red, and swollen skin. The affected area is hot to touch compared with unaffected areas. There may or may not be pus. Recent onset exquisitely painful skin that does not look infected but is associated with feeling unwell often with vomiting and diarrhea and 'flu-like' symptoms needs to be urgently investigated.
Meningitis	Severe headache, neck stiffness, intolerance of bright lights. This may or may not be associated with a rash. Acute confusion or agitation may also occur.
Urinary tract infection	New onset frequent passing of small amounts of urine associated with burning discomfort. Flank pain may also occur.



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 one is newly abnormal and it is due to infection it could be sepsis.

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 signs of organ abnormality 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 what's new from your checklist.

Ask COULD THIS BE SEPSIS?