

Information about SEPSIS IN BABIES AND CHILDREN

COULD IT BE SEPSIS?

By asking the question “could it be sepsis?”, we can help save lives. Children in high risk groups are more likely to get sepsis. Know the signs and symptoms of sepsis so you can act quickly. If you feel no one is listening to you, talk to a senior nurse or doctor about your concerns.


WHAT IS SEPSIS?

Sepsis is the body’s extreme reaction to an infection. It can damage important organs like the heart or lungs and can cause serious illness or death.

Sepsis is an emergency that needs treatment very fast.

SEPSIS IS AN EMERGENCY AND CAN KILL FAST

Call Triple Zero (000)
or go to the closest clinic
or hospital straight away.



WHAT ARE THE SIGNS OF SEPSIS?

One of these symptoms alone does not mean a child has sepsis. However, when any of these things happen together, that’s a sign that it might be sepsis.



Fast breathing
or long pauses
in breathing



Floppy



Blotchy, blue
or pale skin



A lot of pain or
very restless



Fit or seizure



Drowsy,
difficult to wake up,
irritable or confused



Cold skin



Rash that doesn't
fade when pressed



Nausea, vomiting,
unable to eat,
drink or breastfeed



Pass less urine
or have less
wet nappies

JUST ASK: COULD IT BE SEPSIS?

WHO IS AT RISK OF DEVELOPING SEPSIS?

Those who are at high risk of developing sepsis include:

- Anyone sick from an infection that is not getting better
- Young children and babies, especially newborns
- Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people
- Anyone with a low immune system
- Children who have had sepsis before
- Children with a medical device in their body
- Congenital cardiac abnormalities
- Those suffering from really bad burns
- Trauma (or injury), including minor trauma such as a sprained ankle
- Children who have had surgery recently.

HOW TO PROTECT YOUR CHILD FROM SEPSIS

The best way to protect your child from sepsis is to:

- Keep their body and hands clean
- Watch insect bites and skin injuries and see a doctor if they are getting red, hot, or not healing
- Keep your child's vaccinations up to date
- See a doctor or nurse if you see signs of sepsis.

You know your child best. Trust your gut feeling. If you feel your child is sicker than ever before, or this illness is different from other times, ask your doctor or nurse 'could it be sepsis?'

HOW DOES SEPSIS GET TREATED?

If a child is very sick they may need to be admitted to the hospital for care and treatment.

Blood tests will be taken to find out the source of the infection, and strong antibiotics will be given into the vein to kill it.

Fluids into the vein may also be given, and surgery may be needed to wash out the source of infection.

WHY IT'S IMPORTANT TO STOP SEPSIS QUICKLY

Due to poor blood circulation, there may be damage to limbs, fingers or toes, or damage to lungs that can affect breathing, or other organs like the kidney or liver if sepsis isn't stopped quickly.

The long term effects of sepsis may also include:

- Not being able to sleep well
- Having headaches and other pain
- Changes in muscle tone or weakness
- Feeling very tired all the time
- Hard, or unable, to concentrate
- Fear of medical treatments
- Changes in appetite
- Brain changes (impaired mental functioning).

SEPSIS SUPPORT GROUPS

Support groups include sepsis survivors, their families and carers, and families and friends who have lost loved ones to sepsis.

These groups can be contacted for advice and support based on lived experiences:

- Australia and NZ Sepsis Support Group
- T for Thomas (NT)
- Australian Sepsis Network
- Movement for Mia.

