

Could this be sepsis?

Sepsis is a medical emergency and needs immediate treatment.

It happens when the body is fighting an infection but it starts to attack itself. Sepsis can damage the heart, blood vessels, lungs, kidneys and blood clotting systems, and can even cause death. The best chance of getting better from sepsis is to treat it quickly.

Knowing if your child has sepsis is tricky because many of the initial symptoms of sepsis are like those we see in common mild infections. The difference with sepsis is that your child will become more severely ill: the symptoms listed below can be a sign that more severe disease is present.

Sepsis is rare but any child can develop sepsis and we all need to know what to look out for.

You know your child best and we need you on our team.

Trust your gut feeling

If you feel your child is **more unwell than ever before** or **this illness is different from other times** - just ask your doctor or nurse **“Could this be sepsis?”**

Knowing the signs of sepsis

Any ONE of these may mean your child is critically unwell.

Come to hospital straight away - **DON'T DELAY.**



Other signs and symptoms of serious illness in children who may have sepsis:

Any infection can cause sepsis. Most infections in children are caused by viruses and they will get better in a few days with care at home. Some infections need treatment with antibiotics to get better. The list below has some of the signs and symptoms in children who are sick. These may also mean a child is sick with sepsis.

If you think your child is not getting better, or they are getting sicker, **trust your gut feeling**. Tick the boxes that apply to the symptoms your child has, and ask your doctor or nurse **“Could this be sepsis?”**.



Temperature

- Shivering or shaking with a fever
- Low temperature (less than 36°C)
- High temperature (more than 38°C) for 5 days or more
- High temperature (more than 38°C) in a baby 3 months or younger



Breathing

- Grunting noises when breathing
- Working harder to breathe – sucking under the ribs or caving in of the breast bone
- Nostrils that move in and out (flare) with each breath
- Crackly noises from the chest



Activity and movement

- Can't concentrate
- Can't stay awake
- No interest in playing
- Not interested in what is happening around them
- Irritable and won't settle
- Restlessness
- Unable to walk or refusing to walk
- Not using an arm, leg, hand or foot for no obvious reason
- Feeling more unwell than they have before



Pain

- Headache, neck, muscle, chest, bone or joint pain for no obvious reason
- Pain relief is not working



Skin

- Cold hands and feet
- Skin painful to touch
- Bright red skin all over
- Rash



Toileting

- No urine (wee) or wet nappies for 12 hours or more
- Fewer nappies and not as heavy as usual
- Blood in the faeces (poo)
- More than 5 watery diarrhoea (poo) episodes in 24 hours



Eating and drinking

- Unable to keep any fluids down because of vomiting
- Vomit that is green or black or has blood in it
- Not interested in drinking or feeding
- Very thirsty
- Dry mouth, lips and tongue



We know that illnesses can change. Trust your gut feeling. Even if your child has recently been seen by a doctor, if you think your child may have sepsis come back to the hospital and just ask

“Could this be sepsis?”