



Sepsis



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SEPSIS

PATIENT INFORMATION LEAFLET



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THIS IS MODERN MEDICINE

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What is Sepsis?

Sepsis is a time sensitive medical emergency. It is a potentially life-threatening condition which is caused by the body's response to infection. Usually when your body detects an infection, it releases chemicals into your bloodstream to fight the infection. Sepsis occurs when this response goes wrong and triggers changes which can result in serious damage to multiple organs and even death.

Is Sepsis Common?

Yes. Sepsis is the number one cause of death worldwide. The WHO (World Health Organisation) estimates that in 2017, 11 million deaths were as a result of Sepsis. This accounted for about 20% of all deaths worldwide that year. Children under the age of 5 accounted for 2.9 million of these deaths.

Who is at Risk?

Everyone. Sepsis does not discriminate and can affect absolutely anybody. It is more common in post-operative patients, elderly or immunocompromised patients, patients with catheters or intravenous devices and also the very young such as premature babies. It is important to remember that 70% of sepsis starts in the community and is not hospital acquired. This is the reason to always stay vigilant.

What Causes Sepsis?

Sepsis occurs when a localised infection begins to spread throughout the body. This local infection can be as a result of cold or flu, gastroenteritis (vomiting and diarrhoea), or from other germs which enter the body through, for example, a cut or scrape to the skin.

What are the Symptoms of Sepsis?

- Temperature / Fever / Chills: A temperature above 38°C or below 35.5°C can indicate sepsis. This can often be accompanied by shivering or chills.

- Racing Heart: In adults, this is a heart rate greater than 90 beats per minute.
- Fast Breathing: In adults this is a breathing rate of more than 20 breaths per minute.
- Confusion: Especially in elderly patients.
- Blueish, pale or blotchy skin, lips or tongue. A rash that does not fade when pressure is applied can also indicate sepsis. (Do the glass tumbler test, similar to rash symptoms of meningitis).
- Lethargy (weakness) or difficulty waking and poor feeding in babies and children.
- Nausea, vomiting and / or diarrhoea.
- Passing less urine than normal.
- Feeling of 'impending doom'. A lot of patients suffering from sepsis describe '*feeling like I am going to die*'.

Can Sepsis be Cured?

Yes. Seeking medical attention immediately where your doctor will administer the Sepsis Six within one hour of diagnosis increases your chances of survival hugely.

What Should you do if you Suspect Sepsis?

If you suspect you or a loved one has sepsis, it is important to seek immediate medical attention. Contact your GP, your nearest Emergency Department or Emergency Services on 112 or 999 without hesitation. When you contact them, you should say straight away that you suspect sepsis, it could save your life. Start drinking lots of water to help flush out your system while you are on the way to receive medical care and urgent antibiotics.

If you have had confirmed sepsis in the past, make sure you mention it immediately to your medical professional if you suspect you might be experiencing it again. You should also inform your admitting nurse upon any hospital visit that you have suffered from sepsis in the past.