

SPOTTING THE UNWELL CHILD



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SEPSIS
TRUST



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Scan the QR code to open the sepsis assessment tool

WHAT IS SEPSIS?

Sepsis is an emergency medical condition where the immune system overreacts to an infection. It affects people of all ages and, without urgent treatment, can lead to organ failure and death. The numbers are staggering – 245,000 people develop sepsis every year in the UK, and 48,000 die. That's 120 lives lost to sepsis every single day! But, crucially, sepsis is often treatable if caught quickly, so it's really important to be Sepsis Savvy and to just ask: 'could it be sepsis?'

Please use this leaflet if you're concerned about your child's symptoms, especially if their illness seems unlike anything they've had before, and they're 'just not right' – even if their temperature falls again.

This information will help you monitor your child's condition so you know:

- When to ask for help
- Where to go
- How to describe the symptoms.



Some (but not all) children with these symptoms are seriously unwell. Ask for an assessment TODAY from a trained health professional, and Just Ask: "Could it be Sepsis?"

TEMPERATURE

- ☐ Raised temperature (more than 37.5°C) for five days or more
- ☐ Shivering or shaking

BREATHING

- ☐ Nostrils change size with each breath
- ☐ Breathing that's noisy or sounds 'crackly'
- ☐ Cough that sounds like a seal barking

SKIN, LIPS AND TONGUE

- ☐ Unusually pale skin, on black or brown skin it may be easier to spot changes on the inside of the forearm or palms
- ☐ Dry mouth, lips and / or tongue

EATING AND DRINKING

- ☐ Baby who is not feeding (taking less than half their usual amount of milk)
- ☐ Eating much less than normal
- ☐ Has vomited (been sick) more than twice in the last 24 hours

TOILET / NAPPIES

- ☐ More than five watery poos (diarrhoea) in the last 24 hours in babies younger than one year of age
- ☐ Only one wee or wet nappy in eight hours

ACTIVITY AND BODY

- ☐ Less interested than usual in playing
- ☐ Difficult to wake up or unusually sleepy
- ☐ Swelling of a limb or joint
- ☐ Not using / putting weight on an arm, leg, hand or foot

It's sometimes hard to be sure about particular signs and symptoms. If you feel that your child may be seriously ill, or if something that concerns you is not on these lists, call NHS 111, contact your GP, or go to your local Walk-in Centre or Minor Injury Unit depending on your level of concern.

RED SYMPTOMS

Many (but not all) children with these symptoms are seriously unwell.

**TAKE IMMEDIATE ACTION.
DIAL 999 STRAIGHT AWAY. DON'T DELAY.**

- ☐ Temperature over 38°C in babies under three months
- ☐ Temperature over 39°C in babies aged three to six months
- ☐ Any high temperature in a child who cannot be encouraged to show interest in anything
- ☐ Low temperature (below 36°C, check three times in a 10 minute period)

BREATHING

- ☐ Finding it much harder to breathe than normal – looks like hard work
- ☐ Making 'grunting' noises with every breath (in newborns this may sound like a lamb bleating)
- ☐ Very fast breathing (more than one breath each second in babies)
- ☐ Can't say more than a few words at once (for older children who normally talk)
- ☐ Breathing that obviously 'pauses'

SKIN LIPS AND TONGUE

- ☐ Skin is blue, mottled (purplish, red) or very pale. On black or brown skin it may be easier to spot changes on the inside of the forearm or palms
- ☐ Lips or tongue are bluish
- ☐ Eyes look 'sunken'
- ☐ Hands and feet are unusually cold to touch
- ☐ Rash that does not fade when pressed firmly (use a clear glass)

EATING AND DRINKING

- ☐ New baby under one month old with no interest in feeding
- ☐ Not drinking for more than eight hours (when awake)
- ☐ Extremely thirsty
- ☐ Unable to keep fluids down
- ☐ Persistently vomiting for more than 24 hours
- ☐ Bile-stained (green), bloody or black vomit / sick

TOILET / NAPPIES

- ☐ Not had a wee or wet nappy for 12 hours

ACTIVITY AND BODY

- ☐ Soft spot on a baby's head is bulging
- ☐ Child cannot be encouraged to show interest in anything
- ☐ Baby is floppy
- ☐ Weak, 'whining' or continuous crying in a younger child
- ☐ Older child who's confused
- ☐ Not responding or very irritable
- ☐ Hard to wake up, won't stay awake or doesn't seem to recognise you
- ☐ Stiff neck, especially when trying to look up and down

If your child has:

An orange octagon with the text "AMBER symptoms" in white.

AMBER
symptoms

**SEEK MEDICAL ADVICE AND
JUST ASK**
"COULD IT BE SEPSIS?"

A red octagon with the text "RED symptoms" in white.

RED
symptoms

**GET YOUR CHILD TO
HOSPITAL QUICKLY**

**Dial 999 for an
ambulance if necessary**

“WHY DOESN'T EVERYONE KNOW ABOUT THIS?”

“People often ask me if I’m angry about what happened to Sam. Mostly I feel bereft. What does make me angry is when I hear of the same mistakes that contributed to Sam’s avoidable death happening again and again; more children who die because of delays in diagnosis and treatment; more parents who never had the opportunity to ask “could it be sepsis?” because no one told them it existed.”

Sue Morrish (Sam’s Mum).

This information is derived, with permission, from the SAM leaflet produced by NHS England (South West) to improve recognition of sepsis in children. Contributors include paediatricians, sepsis experts, nurses, GPs and parents of children who’ve had sepsis.



JUST ASK

“COULD IT BE SEPSIS?”

If you’ve been affected by sepsis, visit:

sepsistrust.org/get-support, or call:

0808 800 0029 to speak to our specialist support team with many years’ experience.

They’re passionate and dedicated to help those struggling with grief, having problems with recovery or trying to support a loved one.

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Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg hefyd / This document is also available in Welsh.

Rydym yn croesawu gohebiaeth a galwadau ffôn yn Gymraeg / We welcome correspondence and telephone calls in Welsh.