

Sepsis

A medical emergency

Sepsis (also known as septicaemia or blood poisoning) affects about 10,000 children every year in the UK. It occurs when the body is overwhelmed by infection, although it can start from something as simple as a cut or a bite.

What is sepsis?

The bacteria that cause meningococcal meningitis can also cause sepsis when it infects the blood. It is generally more life threatening than meningitis and can also be caused by other germs. Rapid recognition and treatment with antibiotics are needed.

Sepsis can happen after chest or water infections, problems in the abdomen such as burst ulcers or simple skin injuries. If it is not spotted early and treated with antibiotics, it can lead to shock, multiple organ failure and death.

The UK Sepsis Trust urges parents to be vigilant if their child has a fever, an abnormally low temperature or has had a high temperature in the previous 24 hours. Symptoms can be easily mistaken for flu.

Any child under five who is not eating, is vomiting repeatedly, or who has not had a wee or wet nappy for more than 12 hours may have sepsis and you should contact your GP immediately.

GP says

- **Call 999** and or **go to A&E** and say you are worried about sepsis if your child has one or more of the symptoms below:
- Feels abnormally cold to the touch.
- Skin is very pale, mottled or blushed skin.
- Has a rash that does not fade when you press it.
- Is breathing very fast.
- Has a fit or convulsion.
- Lethargic and being difficult to rouse.

Neonatal Sepsis

When a child develops sepsis within a few months of birth (up to 90 days), it is called neonatal sepsis. If the sepsis develops within 24 hours of birth, it is called early-onset and the baby was infected during the delivery. Sepsis that develops after delivery is called late-onset neonatal sepsis.

The risk of early-onset neonatal sepsis is increased if: The mother has group B streptococcus infection while pregnant; the baby is premature; or the mother's membranes rupture (water breaks) more than 24 hours before the baby is delivered.

Babies can develop sepsis after birth if they become infected by bacteria, a virus, or a fungus (rare).

1

My child has had a temperature for more than 24 hours and is not eating.

2

It is easy to confuse symptoms of sepsis with flu.

3

Make sure you get medical advice straight away. Call NHS 111 or your GP.