

SEPSIS

How to recognise if your child is seriously ill



Paediatrics – Information
for Parents and Carers

Introduction

Most children with a fever do get better quickly and without problems, but a very small amount of children may develop a serious infection with sepsis (a bloodstream infection) that requires urgent treatment in hospital

The information inside this leaflet is designed to help to monitor your child's condition if they have a raised temperature, so you can know when to ask for help and can describe the symptoms. You need to regularly check your child for changing or worsening symptoms.

GREEN ...

Low risk: self care advice

If none of the factors on the opposite page are present, use the advice overleaf to provide the care your child needs at home. 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, contact your GP or 111 for advice

AMBER ...

Medium risk: ask for advice

Some children with these symptoms are seriously unwell and need to be assessed by a health professional promptly. Contact your GP, NHS 111 or walk-in centre.

Temperature

- Raised temperature (more than 37.5°C) for 5 days or more
- Temperature over 39°C
- Shivering or shaking

Breathing

- Nostrils change size with each breath
- Breathing faster than normal
- Breathing that's unusually noisy or sounds 'crackly'
- Cough that sounds like a seal is barking

Skin lips & tongue

- Unusually pale skin
- Dry mouth, lips and or tongue
- Rash that fades when pressed firmly (use a clear glass)

Eating & drinking

- Baby under 1 year who is not feeding (or taking less than half their usual amount of milk)
- Feeding or eating much less than normal
- Has vomited (been sick) more than twice in the last 24 hours
- Under 1 year old with vomiting and/or diarrhoea

Toilet / nappies

- Under 1 year old more than 5 watery poos (diarrhoea) in the last 24 hours
- Only one wee or wet nappy in eight hours

Activity & body

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

RED ...

High risk: take action

Some children with these features are seriously unwell and need to be assessed straight away in hospital (A&E). Dial 999 for ambulance if necessary.

Temperature

- Temperature over 38° C in babies under 3 months
- Low temperature (below 36° C, check 3 times in a 10 minute period)

Breathing

- Finding it much harder to breathe than normal – looks like they are working hard
- Making 'grunting' noises with every breath (in new-borns it may sound like a lamb bleating)
- Very fast breathing (more than one breath each second in babies under 1 year)
- Can't say more than a few words at once (for older children that normally talk)
- Breathing with obvious pauses

Skin lips & tongue

- Skin is blue, mottled (purplish, red) or very pale
- Lips or tongue are bluish
- Eyes look sunken
- Hands and feet are unusually cold to touch
- Rash that doesn't fade when pressed firmly (use a clear glass)

Eating & drinking

- Babies under 1 month with no interest in feeding
- Not drinking for more than 8 hours (when awake)
- Extremely thirsty or unable to keep fluids down
- Vomiting for more than 24 hours
- Bloody, black or brown vomit / sick

Toilet / nappies

- Not had a wee or wet nappy for 12 hours

Activity & body

- Soft spot on baby's head is bulging
- Child is floppy
- Not responding to family or carers, or irritable
- Weak, high pitched or continuous crying in a younger child
- 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
- Older children who are confused
- The child has a seizure (fit)

Practical things you can do to help your child

- Check your child during the night to see if they are getting better.
- If you are concerned that your child is not improving or has new symptoms seek advice from 111.
- Child with a fever should not be over or under dressed.
- If your child is hot to touch remove some of their clothes.

- Tepid sponging is no longer recommended for the treatment of fever.
- Offer your child regular drinks (where a baby is breastfed, the most appropriate fluid is breast milk).
- If your child is due to have immunisations please consult your GP, Practice Nurse or Health Visitor for advice – there may be a need to delay their appointment.
- If you need to keep your child away from nursery or school while they are unwell and have a fever please notify the nursery or school. Your Health Visitor, Community Nurse or GP will be able to advise you if you are unsure.

Using medications to help

- If your child is distressed or very unwell you may use Paracetamol or Ibuprofen to help them feel more comfortable – however it is not always necessary.
- Don't routinely give both, Paracetamol and Ibuprofen at the same time – use one and if your child has not improved 2 – 3 hours later you may want to try giving the other medicine.
- Please read the instructions on the medication bottle first for dose and frequency. Be aware of the maximum dose which can be given over 24 hour period.
- You could ask your local community pharmacist for more advice about medication.
- Never give aspirin to a child.

NHS 111

To contact the NHS 111 services simply dial 111 (free from mobiles and landlines).

If you need language support or translation please inform the member of staff to speak to you.

Find out more

Detailed information can be found on the NICE website:
www.nice.org.uk/Guidance/CG160

The UK Sepsis Trust also has a lot of helpful material at:
www.sepsistrust.org

Email: info@sepsistrust.org
Telephone: 0845 606 6255



Comments, compliments, concerns or complaints

South Tees Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust is concerned about the quality of care you receive and strives to maintain high standards of health care.

However we do appreciate that there may be an occasion where you, or your family, feel dissatisfied with the standard of service you receive. Please do not hesitate to tell us about your concerns as this helps us to learn from your experience and to improve services for future patients.

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

This service aims to advise and support patients, families and carers and help sort out problems quickly on your behalf.

This service is available, and based, at The James Cook University Hospital but also covers the Friarage Hospital in Northallerton, our community hospitals and community health services. Please ask a member of staff for further information.

If you require this information in a different format please contact Freephone 0800 0282451

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