

## Sepsis

Sepsis is a common and potentially life-threatening condition triggered by the body's response to infection.

It is usually caused by bacterial infections, but it can also be caused by viral and fungal infections.

Sepsis arises when the body's response to an infection injures its own tissues or organs (Ellis, 2014).

When people suffer from sepsis, the body's immune system overreacts causing widespread inflammation, swelling and blood clotting. These reactions can cause a significant reduction in blood pressure, which can decrease the blood supply to vital organs and starve them of oxygen.

If not treated quickly, sepsis may lead to multiple organ failure and death.

### **The most common causes of sepsis include:**

- pneumonia
- urinary tract infections
- abdominal infections
- severe skin infections
- infections following surgery.

### **Anyone can get sepsis but those who are at greater risk include people:**

- who are immune compromised
- with multiple co morbidities
- who have had chemotherapy, surgery or trauma within 6 weeks
- with an indwelling line and/or catheter
- who are at risk of significant infections
- who have repeated healthcare attendances.

### **Residents living in care homes represent one of the high-risk groups for sepsis as they are:**

- elderly
- often have co morbidities
- are immune compromised
- at risk of infections which commonly lead to sepsis.

## Signs of infection

Not all infections lead to sepsis, but as sepsis is the end stage of infection, it is important to be aware of the signs of infection, as well as the signs of sepsis.

- General signs of infection can include: raised or low body temperature; shivering; chills; fever/rigors; raised heartbeat; rapid breathing; altered mental state.
- Signs of a respiratory infection can include: altered respirations; cough; sputum.
- Signs of a urine infection can include: frequency; pain on passing urine; offensive smelling urine; loin pain.
- Signs of a skin infection can include: red tender skin; discharge from a wound; ulceration; cellulitis.
- Signs of an intestinal infection can include: abdominal pain; diarrhoea; vomiting.

## Signs of sepsis which may follow on from an infection can include:

- confusion, slurred speech or not making sense
- lethargic or unresponsive
- blue, pale or blotchy skin, lips or tongue
- a rash that does not fade when you roll a glass over it (similar to meningitis)
- breathlessness, difficulty breathing or breathing very fast
- observations: blood pressure; pulse; oxygen saturations; temperature which are lower or higher from a resident's usual baseline observations. \*

\*Staff must be trained and competent to take observations

## Suspect sepsis?

- sepsis can be hard to spot
- symptoms can be vague and can be confused with other conditions
- trust your instincts. If you think someone has sepsis report to your manager immediately who will need to seek further urgent medical attention
- sepsis can be life threatening – early detection and early appropriate management helps save lives.

## Prevention

Infection prevention and good management of infections are important for helping to prevent sepsis by ensuring:

- good knowledge and management of residents who have an infection
- good knowledge of residents who are at high risk/repeated risk of infections and those residents who have had a previous sepsis diagnosis
- optimal management of indwelling catheters and PEG feeds
- optimal management following surgical interventions or procedures
- all vaccinations are up to date for residents and staff E.g., flu, COVID-19, pneumonia
- high standards of environmental cleanliness throughout the home
- good standards of hand hygiene amongst staff and residents and hand hygiene audits amongst staff
- staff training in correct use of PPE
- good standards of care with optimal hydration and nutrition of residents.

## IPC Advice, Support, Information & Resources:

- Advice, support, and information for care home staff on the management of all infections: E.g., COVID-19; MRSA; CDI; *E. coli*; Scabies
- Advice & support to undertake a range of care home IPC audits to national standards.
- Support safe hospital discharge for residents who have been treated for an infection.
- IPC annual training programme (2023/24) & bespoke IPC courses for care home managers, clinical staff, IPC link champions, care and domestic staff.
- Advice & support on new builds & extensions to meet IPC specifications.

A wide range of excellent **IPC policies and procedures** are available to help you to manage infections in your care homes. Please follow the link below: [Care Services Cumberland - Policies and Procedures | Cumbria County Council](#)

## Training Dates for Your Diary

### September

- Infection prevention and control training for community-based services 2024  
Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> September 1pm-2:30pm [Click here to join the meeting now](#)

### October

- Infection prevention and control training for residential care settings 2024  
Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> October 10am-12:30pm [Click here to join the meeting now](#)
- Infection prevention and control training for community-based services 2024  
Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> October 11am-12:30pm [Click here to join the meeting now](#)

### November

- Infection prevention and control training for residential care settings 2024  
Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> November 1pm-3:30pm [Click here to join the meeting now](#)

Infection prevention and control training for community-based services 2024  
Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> November 1pm-2:30pm [Click here to join the meeting now](#)