

Key Messages for Health Professionals

Priority Principals

1. Early recognition and early treatment of sepsis saves lives.
 - The Paediatric Sepsis Pathway should be used in every child with suspected sepsis.
 - Screening and applying the pathway could save a child's life.
 - The pathway is designed to save a child's life
 - The pathway helps clinicians deliver the treatment every child deserves.
2. Recognising sepsis early in children is difficult, using the sepsis pathway empowers clinicians' decision making.
3. Parents are a key part of the team delivering sepsis care to their child.
4. Parents and families of children with sepsis need consistent information and support throughout their sepsis journey.
5. The Paediatric Sepsis Pathway improves empiric antibiotic treatment in sepsis and complies with AMS principles.
6. The National Clinical Care Standard for sepsis requires implementation of local clinical pathway that includes a recognition tool.

What is sepsis?

- **Simple definition:** Sepsis is a life-threatening illness that occurs when the body's response to infection damages its own tissues and organs.
- **Technical definition:** Sepsis is defined as a dysregulated immune response to infection resulting in organ dysfunction.

Incidence of sepsis?

- Sepsis is a major cause of morbidity and mortality worldwide, and the incidence is increasing.
- Sepsis represents a leading cause of preventable death and disability in children with mortality rates higher than road toll deaths and leukaemia.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are more vulnerable to developing sepsis and more likely to have poorer outcomes.
- Sepsis is preventable and treatable.



Seriousness of sepsis

- Sepsis is a medical emergency with a high mortality rate.
- Sepsis can affect anyone and can be triggered by just about any type of infection such as flu, stomach infection or a grazed knee.
- Sepsis mortality increases each hour without treatment.
- Sepsis has lasting effects on survivors and their families.
- Up to one third of children who are diagnosed with sepsis are left with lifelong disability or impaired function, both physical and psychological, and require ongoing support from medical and allied health professionals.

Signs and symptoms – to clinicians

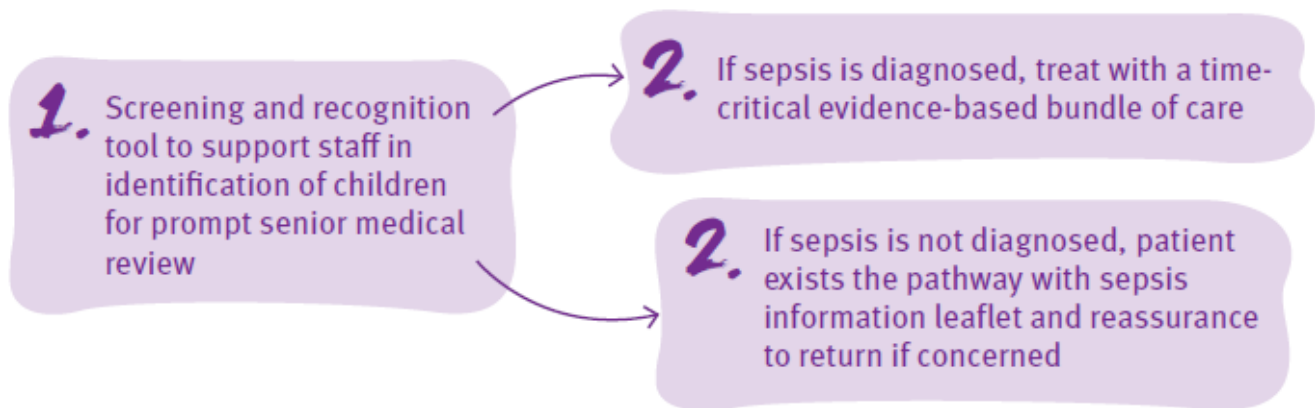
- If your patient has a suspected infection with history of fever/hypothermia, pain, lethargy or confusion, breathlessness, blotchy, blue or pale skin– screen them on the Paediatric Sepsis Pathway.
- Has your patient re-presented within 48 hours? Think: Could this be sepsis?
- Parents know their children best – don't dismiss parental concerns.
- Don't dismiss patient, family, or carer concerns.
- Trust your gut – if you're concerned seek rapid senior medical review.
- If you're worried, escalate.
- Childhood infection is common, but childhood sepsis is rare; the Paediatric Sepsis Pathway is designed to support clinicians to be vigilant to the early signs of sepsis.
- The signs and symptoms of paediatric sepsis mimic those commonly seen with a mild infection. The use of the Paediatric Sepsis Pathway empowers clinicians to differentiate sepsis from other infections.

Sepsis treatment

- Early detection and treatment of sepsis saves lives.
- Sepsis is frequently underdiagnosed at an early stage when it is still potentially reversible.
- Every child deserves the best evidence-based care, including the use of the best clinical tools available to screen, diagnosis and treat sepsis.
- Overseas evidence shows the use of a sepsis bundle leads to faster resolution of organ dysfunction, reduced ICU and hospital length of stay, and improved patient outcomes.
- Each hour delay in the administration of antibiotics increases mortality in septic patients by >5%, the duration of organ failure and need for ICU support.
- The use of the Paediatric Sepsis Pathway recommends multiple re-assessments to monitor response to treatment and to prioritise escalation decisions.
- Antimicrobial stewardship (AMS) describes the optimal use of antibiotics. The Paediatric Sepsis Pathway recommends the appropriate use of antibiotics early in the course of sepsis treatment and is consistent with AMS principles.

Clinical pathways

- The Paediatric Sepsis Pathway has been co-designed by consumers and clinicians, approved by the Paediatric Sepsis Clinical Advisory Group and endorsed by QEDSAP and CHQ Medicines Advisory Council.
- The Paediatric Sepsis Pathway incorporates international evidence and best practice guidelines.
- The statewide sepsis pathways include a sepsis recognition tool, screening tool, treatment bundle and antibiotic prescribing and administration guidelines.
- The pathway has two functions



- Adoption of the Paediatric Sepsis Pathway has already proven to reduce hospital length of stay
- The Paediatric Sepsis Pathway aligns with the [Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care Sepsis Clinical Care Standard](#).
- An ieMR pathway continues to be a priority for Queensland Health, with discussion ongoing with Cerner for an appropriate solution.

Need more information?

- To order the sepsis clinical pathways go to [CEQ Clinical Pathways website](#).
- If you require any other materials or have any questions, please email paediatricsepsis@health.qld.gov.au

**COULD IT BE
SEPSIS?**