

SEPSIS

Information for parents, carers and families of children with sepsis

What is sepsis?

Sepsis happens when the body has an extreme response to an infection and starts to injure its own tissues and organs. Sepsis can be triggered by any infection (viral, fungal, bacterial) but most commonly occurs with bacterial infections of the brain, lungs, bladder, kidneys, abdomen, skin and soft tissues.

Care for your child in hospital

Your child's healthcare team will provide urgent treatments including:

- Insertion of a cannula, collection of blood tests and administration of antibiotics.
- Give fluids and other medicines, via a cannula, to support your child's circulation.
- Monitor your child's response to treatment.
- Consult with a sepsis expert.
- Arrange for transfer to the most appropriate place for your child's care which may be a general ward or Paediatric Intensive Care Unit (PICU).

There will be many people in your child's healthcare team, which may include doctors, nurses and a social worker. You are your child's key support and advocate; let your healthcare team know about your child's condition, their progress and any changes that concern you.

Your healthcare team should talk to you about:

- What a diagnosis of sepsis means for your child in the short, medium and long term.
- Plans for your child's treatment, who will provide this care and their response to treatment.
- What to expect during your child's recovery.
- How to inform the healthcare team if you are concerned your child is getting worse.
- Support you can receive in hospital.

Ryan's Rule

You and your family will be informed about your child's treatment options and involved in decisions about their care. If you have concerns that your child's health condition is getting worse or not improving, discuss this initially with the healthcare team. You can also search 'Ryan's Rule' on the Children's Health Queensland website to learn about raising concerns.



Support for your family in hospital

Dealing with a complex health issue like sepsis and a hospital admission can be stressful and challenging for all family members. Speak to your child's healthcare team about ways to access additional support which may include:

- Social workers who can provide help to adjust and manage your child's health condition and admission.
- Welfare workers who can provide practical support with accommodation, finances, travel, and social needs.

Children and medical procedures

It is common for children to struggle with some medical procedures. Reassure your child of your support. It helps children to know what is going to happen, why the procedure needs to happen and who will be involved. For more ideas, scan this QR code and read our blog on supporting your child through a procedure.



Cultural support

Let your healthcare team know if you need:



A translator or interpreter.



An Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Liaison Officer.

Sepsis resources

Sepsis on the Children's Health Queensland website has information for families including:

- 'Journeying through Sepsis' video series to support you through each stage of your child's sepsis journey.
- Paediatric Sepsis Family Support Network
- Paediatric Sepsis Peer Mentor Program.

For more information visit Sepsis on the Children's Health Queensland website at www.childrens.health.qld.gov.au/sepsis or scan the QR code below.

Questions you could ask your child's healthcare team

- What will my child's treatment be?
- Who will provide this treatment?
- How will my child be affected by sepsis and it's treatment?
- What complications of sepsis and the treatment should I be aware of?
- How did my child become unwell with sepsis?
- Who is my main contact person within the hospital for my child's care?
- What should I expect as my child recovers in hospital after the initial critical care for sepsis?
- How can I escalate my concerns if my child is getting worse?
- What supports are available to me, my child and my family in hospital?
- What should I expect with my child's recovery after discharge from hospital?
- What are the potential long-term impacts of my child's sepsis diagnosis?
- Is my child likely to come back to hospital?
- What are signs my child is getting unwell again, and when should we return to hospital or our GP?
- What supports are available to my child and our family following discharge from hospital?



Illnesses can change – trust your gut feeling. Even if your child has recently had sepsis, if you think they may have sepsis again come back to hospital and ask 'Could it be sepsis?'

Visit www.childrens.health.qld.gov.au/sepsis