

How to prevent Sepsis in practice

What is sepsis?

Sepsis is life threatening organ dysfunction due to dysregulated host response to infection

Red flags for sepsis

Consider sepsis whenever infection is suspected or patient looks unwell

Measure observations including respiratory rate and record early warning scores to identify risk

If red flags then admit via 999 and state sepsis in referral letter

- a. BP <90 mmHg
- b. RR >25 breaths/minute
- c. HR >130 beats/minute
- d. SaO₂ <91%
- e. Unresponsive or responds only to voice or pain
- f. Mottled skin or purpuric rash

Why is sepsis important?

Third leading cause of death – mortality rate is five times higher than acute MI and stroke

Incidence increasing due to ageing population and antibiotic resistant organisms

70% of sepsis cases arise in the community rather than hospital

Effective primary care management can improve outcomes in up to 40% of sepsis cases

Who gets sepsis?

Young, fit healthy people can develop sepsis even from even minor infections. Babies, young children, the elderly and patients with chronic illness or immunosuppression, severe burns or wounds are more likely to have a poor outcome.

How to safety net for sepsis

Use safety netting in patients without reg flags. Tell the patient about signs to look out for and record that you have told the patient or relative to seek care if any of the following symptoms develop:

- Slurred speech
- Extremely painful muscles
- Passing no urine x 18 hours
- Severe breathlessness
- I feel like I am going to die
- Skin is mottled or discoloured

Consider a next day review in patients with sepsis and no Red Flag managed in the community, together with advice about how to access advice in and out of hours should their condition deteriorate.

Think prevention

Vaccinate the vulnerable against flu and pneumonia

Read further resources e.g. UK Sepsis Trust Toolkit