

# **Are you Sepsis aware?**

Melissa Mead, Sepsis Trust

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At the UK Sepsis Trust we are passionate about raising awareness of this potentially life-threatening condition that affect 25,000 children every year in the UK. Sepsis (previously known as blood-poisoning) is the bodies reaction to an infection in which the body attacks its own tissues and organs, killing 44,000 people in the UK every year. Sepsis however, can be treated effectively with antibiotics if caught promptly.

Awareness can and does save lives, with children an at-risk group it is imperative that those childcare professionals who are caring for young children are able to spot the signs and symptoms of sepsis and act quickly. With infection being rife amongst children, it is important to know what 'worse' looks like.

After the death of Melissa's son William December 2014 due to sepsis, Melissa has not stopped campaigning to raise awareness.

## **So what causes sepsis?**

Normally your body's immune system responds to infection by working to fight any germs (bacteria, viruses, fungi), or to prevent infection. However, for reasons we do not fully understand, sometimes the immune system goes in to overdrive. It can happen as a response to any injury or infection, anywhere in the body. It can result from:

- A chest infection like pneumonia
- A urine infection (UTI)
- A problem in the abdomen like gastroenteritis, or problems like a burst ulcer or a hole in the bowel
- An infected cut or bite
- A wound from trauma or surgery
- A leg ulcer or cellulitis.

Sepsis can be caused by a huge variety of different germs, like streptococcus, e-coli, MRSA or C Diff. **Most cases are caused by common bacteria, which normally don't make us ill.**

Sepsis is a major cause of death in the under-five population and is where so many sepsis-related deaths are preventable. This group of patients is vulnerable, and their sepsis symptoms are often miss-interpreted with other self-limiting conditions such as flu or gastroenteritis, potentially resulting in delayed treatment.

In young children and infants, language and understanding can be a communication barrier. Children can often compensate well during a disease process like sepsis. This means that subtle changes can be missed until they suddenly become extremely unwell. It is so important to trust your instincts.

As a childcare provider it is important that you, your staff and parents are aware of the signs and symptoms and are able to seek the appropriate medical care without delay. Early recognition, diagnosis and treatment dramatically improves outcomes from sepsis. In children these are the symptoms to be aware of:

Raising awareness of sepsis in your childcare setting, not just amongst staff but also parents, will no doubt save lives. At the UK Sepsis Trust our goal is to end preventable deaths from sepsis and improve outcomes for sepsis survivors.

With help from supporters we are putting sepsis on the national and global agenda. We encourage you to think about sepsis when you are caring for a child that you suspect or already has an infection; and if you are unsure always **Just Ask: Could it be Sepsis?**

## **About the author**

Melissa Mead works for the UK Sepsis Trust and has campaigned tirelessly since the preventable death of her one year old son William in December

2014. Melissa hadn't heard of sepsis before William died, this is something she wants to change for all parents, and the general public. Together with the UK Sepsis Trust they work with large stakeholders, like PACEY to ensure that this vital information reaches the people who really need it.

For more information or to find out how you can get involved please contact Melissa on [Melissa@sepsistrust.org](mailto:Melissa@sepsistrust.org)

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