



Information for
patients and
carers

**Protecting yourself from genital
tract sepsis**

In recent years there has been an increase in the number of pregnant women and new mothers who have become seriously ill as a result of genital tract sepsis (infection).

The following information explains how you can protect yourself from genital tract sepsis, describes the signs and symptoms of the illness and tells you what to do if you think you may have been infected.

What is genital tract sepsis?

Genital tract sepsis occurs when bacteria (germs) enter the body through the vagina and womb. Without prompt antibiotic treatment the bacteria can spread to the blood stream and occur throughout the body. Sepsis is the reaction to an infection in which the body attacks its own organs and tissues. If untreated, sepsis can lead to shock, the failure of body organs (e.g. kidneys, heart) and death.

The bacteria responsible for many cases of sepsis arising from the genital tract are Group A Streptococci (GAS). They are commonly occurring bacteria that can be found on the skin and in the throats of almost one third of the population. They are usually harmless but GAS is a common cause of sore throats in young children.

GAS can be transferred to your genital tract if the bacteria contaminate your hands; for example, when you are caring for family members with colds and sore throats.

There have also been cases of sepsis caused by E. coli, which is normally present in the gut, and is a common cause of urinary tract infection.

How do I protect myself from genital tract sepsis?

Maintain good personal hygiene at all times

- Wash your hands before and after using the toilet or changing sanitary pads
- Keep the perineal area (between vagina and back passage) clean and dry
- Frequently change your maternity/sanitary pads
- Take particular care if anyone in your household has a sore throat, cough or cold

What are the signs and symptoms of genital tract sepsis?

- Feeling feverish and unwell, as if you have flu
- Feeling breathless and anxious
- Diarrhoea and vomiting
- Abdominal pain
- Rash
- Abnormal vaginal discharge
- Red, painful wound if you have had any surgery or stitches
- Unlike many infections, your temperature may not be raised so taking your temperature is not a reliable means of assessing your illness. Genital tract sepsis can occur at any stage of pregnancy and also in the first few weeks after giving birth

What should I do if I think I may have sepsis?

- Contact your doctor or midwife urgently
- If you experience any difficulty you should contact the Sharoe Green Unit Delivery Suite **01772 524495**

What is the treatment for genital tract sepsis?

- Specimens of blood and urine and vaginal swabs are taken to identify the bacteria responsible; the results will show whether additional or different antibiotics are needed
- Antibiotics are given as soon as possible
- You would need to stay in hospital during this time so that your condition could be closely monitored
- Other treatment will depend on the course of the illness

Contact details

Should you require further advice or information please contact:
Your midwife
Sharoe Green Unit Antenatal clinic **01772 524448**

Sources of further information

www.lancsteachinghospitals.nhs.uk

www.nhs.uk

www.patient.co.uk

www.accessable.co.uk

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Please ask if you would like help in understanding this information. This information can be made available in large print and in other languages.

Cantonese:

如果你希望以另外一種格式接收該資訊，請和我們聯絡，不必猶豫。

Gujarati:

જો તમને આ માહિતી બીજી રચના કે ફોર્મેટમાં મેળવવાની ઈચ્છા હોય, તો કૃપા કરી અમારો સંપર્ક કરતા અચકાશો નહિ.

Hungarian:

Kérjük, vegye fel velünk a kapcsolatot, ha más formában kéri ezt az információt.

Polish:

Jeżeli chciał(a)by Pan/Pani otrzymać niniejsze informacje w innym formacie, prosimy o kontakt.

Punjabi:

ਜੇ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਫਾਰਮੈਟ ਵਿਚ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਲੈਣਾ ਚਾਹੁੰਦੇ ਹੋ ਤਾਂ ਸਾਡੇ ਨਾਲ ਸੰਪਰਕ ਕਰਨ ਤੋਂ ਨਾ ਝਿਜਕੋ।

Urdu:

اگر آپ اس معلومات کو کسی اور صورت میں حاصل کرنا چاہتے ہیں تو برائے مہربانی ہم سے رابطہ کرنے میں ہچکچاہٹ محسوس نہ کریں۔

Department: Maternity

Division: Women and Children's

Production date: May 2020

Review date: May 2023

JR495 v1