

NATIONAL SEPSIS AWARENESS CAMPAIGN GUIDE

**COULD IT
BE SEPSIS?**



**AUSTRALIAN COMMISSION
ON SAFETY AND QUALITY IN HEALTH CARE**

 The George Institute
for Global Health



ASN
Australian Sepsis Network

EVERY YEAR, OVER 55,000 AUSTRALIANS ARE DIAGNOSED WITH SEPSIS AND SADLY, MORE THAN 8,700 LOSE THEIR LIVES TO THE CONDITION.

WHAT IS SEPSIS?

Sepsis is a life-threatening condition that arises when the body's response to an infection damages its own tissues and organs. Sepsis is preventable but when it does occur, it is a medical emergency that requires rapid treatment to prevent lifelong disability or death.

ABOUT WORLD SEPSIS DAY

13 September marks World Sepsis Day: an initiative of the Global Sepsis Alliance established in 2012 to draw attention to the impact sepsis has on the lives of everyday people and their families.

World Sepsis Day provides an opportunity for clinicians and the community alike to be aware of the signs and symptoms of sepsis, encourage prompt recognition and treatment, and ensure adequate support for survivors.

AUSTRALIA'S NATIONAL SEPSIS AWARENESS CAMPAIGN

The Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care, in partnership with The George Institute for Global Health and the Australian Sepsis Network is delivering a National Sepsis Awareness Campaign. The Campaign is a multi-modal program targeted towards clinicians, health service organisations and the general community, focussed on reducing preventable harm caused by sepsis.

'Only 23% of Australians are aware of sepsis symptoms' (ASN, 2020)

The Campaign will be launched on World Sepsis Day 2021 – **13 September 2021** – and run for ten weeks through to **26 November 2021**.

COMMUNICATIONS TOOLKIT THEME

The consistent theme to raise awareness nationally is:

COULD IT BE SEPSIS?

By simply asking whether it could be sepsis, life-saving treatment can be provided to stop the risk of severe health complications and death. "Could it be sepsis?" is an enabling phrase that the public can use to engage with clinicians when concerned and it empowers clinicians to suspect sepsis where patients present with no clear provisional diagnosis and there is the possibility of infection.

CAMPAIGN MESSAGES

The following health messages are the focus of the National Sepsis Awareness Campaign.

JUST THINK • COULD IT BE SEPSIS?

For clinicians, this message encourages considering whether the presenting signs and symptoms point to a suspected or confirmed sepsis diagnosis. It signifies that clinicians must act quickly to provide the necessary life-saving treatment to stop the progression of sepsis.

JUST ASK • COULD IT BE SEPSIS?

For patients, their families and healthcare consumers generally, “Just ask: could it be sepsis?” is an empowering statement. This message is an integral part of helping clinicians turn their thinking towards considering a sepsis diagnosis. It also supports patients and their families to speak up about sepsis and voice their concerns if they feel something is not right.

JUST SAY SEPSIS!

For use by journalists, media and influencers, using the term ‘sepsis’ accurately and consistently is crucial. The communication tools aim to bring the word sepsis into the public vernacular, and avoid confusion and inaccuracy caused by using terms like ‘septicaemia’ or ‘blood infection’ interchangeably. By simply saying ‘sepsis’, clinicians and the general public can help create the necessary sense of urgency required to initiate treatment.



SECONDARY MESSAGES

To support state and territory health departments and health service organisations, the following secondary messages can be adopted into local resources and artefacts:

- Sepsis is a medical emergency
- Understanding what sepsis is and highlighting the need for the consistent use and familiarity of the word and the layman’s definition:

“Sepsis is the life-threatening condition that arises when your body’s response to an infection damages its own tissues and organs”.

- Know the signs of sepsis, emphasising that not all are required and may present as a combination of subtle changes
- Listen to patient concerns about feeling “worse than ever” and parent concerns about children being “sicker than normal” and if there has been no improvement in their condition over time
- Any infection can lead to sepsis and anyone can get it
- Increased risk of sepsis is seen in the very young, elderly and people with chronic illness
- Time is critical: get help early and just ask: “Could it be sepsis?”

HOW YOU CAN GET INVOLVED

Clinicians, health service organisations and the general community are encouraged to participate in raising national awareness of sepsis.

WAYS TO PARTICIPATE

- Schedule a **World Sepsis Day** event: host a morning tea, deliver a Grand Rounds for clinical staff or an education in-service on sepsis in your clinical area
- Talk to your colleagues and friends about sepsis
- Familiarise yourself with the signs and symptoms of sepsis
- Make your clinical sepsis policies and pathways visible to your staff throughout the Campaign
- Circulate the Sepsis Awareness communications toolkit resources including adding the web banner to your local intranet
- Add your state or local health service organisation's logo to the toolkit resources
- Most importantly: **"Just say sepsis!"**

ALIGN YOUR SOCIAL MEDIA CHANNELS

Support the campaign by using the following hashtags across your social media channels:

#sepsis

#sepsisawarenesscampaign

#worldsepsisday

#coulditbesepsis

#justthinkcoulditbesepsis

#justaskcoulditbesepsis

#justsaysepsis

#knowthesignsofsepsis