

# Emergency Department (ED) Paediatric Sepsis Clinical Pathway - Factsheet

## Background

Sepsis is an important cause of preventable morbidity and mortality in adults and children in Australia. The implementation of sepsis clinical pathways are associated with improved outcomes internationally.

The Clinical Excellence Queensland's (CEQ) *Could this be Sepsis?* Program is designed to improve sepsis patient outcomes.

The program initially focused on Emergency Departments (EDs); implementing a paediatric and adult sepsis clinical pathway as part of a state-wide quality improvement project during 2018-19. The *Could this be Sepsis?* Program is governed by the State-wide Sepsis Steering Committee.

## About the Paediatric Sepsis Pathway

consumers across the state. The pathway was developed for use in secondary and tertiary EDs and rural and remote facilities.

The paediatric sepsis collaborative quality improvement project implemented the pathway in 16 HHS ED departments and 90 rural and remote facilities in 2018-2019.

We have now refined the pathway following stakeholder feedback and data analysis of the pathway performance. The improved pathway (2020) is simpler to use and effectively recognises sepsis. There are adaptations for rural and remote facilities to prioritise early escalation.

The pathway includes a sepsis screening and recognition tool, treatment bundle, antibiotic prescribing and administration guidelines for paediatric patients and a tear away factsheet for parents.

The treatment bundle is aligned with the [2020 Surviving Sepsis Campaign](#) paediatric clinical guidelines and should be completed as soon as possible after sepsis recognition; however, at least, within one hour in patients with septic shock. The bundle elements include

- Ensuring Senior Medical and Nursing Officers are aware the patient has sepsis by following your location escalation pathway
- Maintaining oxygen saturations
- Obtaining IV / intraosseous access and blood cultures
- Commence IV / intraosseous antibiotics within one hour
- Providing IV / intraosseous fluids as required
- Preparing inotropic support

The antibiotic guidelines attached to the pathway are designed to achieve the most appropriate empirical therapy, accounting for the epidemiology Queensland infections including antimicrobial resistance. They aim to maintain antimicrobial stewardship best practice through selective antibiotic use.

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 Queensland Government  
 Emergency Department  
**PAEDIATRIC**  
**Sepsis Pathway**  
 For tertiary and secondary facilities  
 Facility: \_\_\_\_\_

URN: \_\_\_\_\_ (Affix identification label here)  
 Family name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Given name(s): \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Date of birth: \_\_\_\_\_ Sex:  M  F  I

Clinical pathways never replace clinical judgement. Use this pathway in children younger than 16 years.  
 16-18 year olds may use the adult or paediatric sepsis clinical pathway.

**Sepsis is infection with organ dysfunction. Sepsis is a MEDICAL EMERGENCY.**

Screening initiated: \_\_\_\_\_ : \_\_\_\_\_ (24hr)

**SCREEN**  
 Could this be sepsis?  
 Signs of infection including history or evidence of fever/hypothermia  
**PLUS ANY of the following**  
 Looks sick/toxic  Altered behaviour or reduced level of consciousness  
 Parental/and/or clinician concern  Age younger than 3 months  
 Immunocompromised\*  
 \*For Oncology patients refer to 'Management of Suspected Neutropenic Sepsis Pathway'

YES  
 Document full set of observations in CEWT including blood pressure and AVPU

**RECOGNISE**  
 Does the patient have ANY features of severe illness?  
 Severe respiratory distress/tachypnoea/apnoea (CEWT respiratory score 3)  Altered AVPU  
 Severe tachycardia (CEWT heart rate score 3)  Poor skin perfusion/cold extremities  
 Hypotension (CEWT blood pressure score 2 or more)  Lactate ≥2mmol/L (if known)  
 Other laboratory features of severe illness (if known):  
 Low platelets  Elevated creatinine  Elevated INR/bilirubin  
 These laboratory tests are not mandatory

YES (severe features present) → Patient has SEPSIS or SEPTIC SHOCK until proven otherwise  
 • IMMEDIATE transfer to resuscitation area  
 • IMMEDIATE senior medical review  
 • Notify Consultant

NO (severe features absent)  
 Do you still suspect sepsis?  
 YES → Patient may have SEPSIS  
 • Targeted history and examination  
 • Obtain senior medical review  
 • Consider blood tests (including lactate)

NO → Patient unlikely to have sepsis NOW  
 • Re-evaluate and escalate as indicated  
 Parent/carer information leaflet given

**ESCALATE/DE-ESCALATE**  
 Senior medical review attended: \_\_\_\_\_ : \_\_\_\_\_ (24hr)  
 Does the senior clinician think sepsis is likely?  
 Yes - sepsis with shock  Unlikely sepsis  
 Yes - sepsis without shock

SEPSIS has been diagnosed by a senior medical doctor.  
 Start resuscitation and treatment for sepsis NOW (see page 2)  
 For support, call PICU/ICU/Retrieval Services Queensland (RSQ - 1300 795 127)

**Signature Log** Every person documenting in this clinical pathway must supply a sample of their initials and signature below

Initials	Signature	Print name	Role	Initials	Signature	Print name	Role

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The Paediatric sepsis pathway is based on international best practice and incorporates input from a broad base of paediatric experts and



The tear away factsheet for parents describes the signs and symptoms of Sepsis and delivers a clear message to “trust your gut” and ask a doctor or nurse “Could this be sepsis?” if they think their child is not getting better. The paediatric ED pathway is available for order and use across the state.

Go to [CEQ Clinical Pathways](#) to view a copy of the pathway or refer to the *How to Order* section below to order for your facility.

## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

The pathways have been revised and simplified following stakeholder feedback and pathway performance evaluation. For more details on the pathway changes refer to the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) guide.

## Stakeholder Engagement

The state-wide sepsis clinical pathways were developed following extensive consultation with multiple stakeholders across Queensland. The ED Paediatric Sepsis Pathways have been endorsed and approved by the following groups

- Sepsis Clinical Collaborative
- Queensland Paediatric Sepsis Clinical Advisory Group (CAG)
- Children’s Health Queensland Medicines Advisory Committee (CHQMAC)
- Rural and Remote Sepsis Pathway Working Group and
- Queensland Emergency Department Strategic Advisory Panel (QEDSAP)

## Education

- [Optimus PRIME eLearning package \(Module 8: Sepsis\)](#)
- [Optimus BONUS simulation package](#)
- [Optimus Educational skills training videos](#)
- [Paediatric Strength with Immersion Model \(SwIM\) program](#)
- [The Red Flags of Paediatric Sepsis video](#)
- [How to use the Paediatric Sepsis Pathway video](#)
- [College of Emergency Nursing Australasia \(CENA\) Emergency Cooking \(Episode Two: Omelette you know about Sepsis\)](#)

- [Paediatric Emergency Medicine \(PEM\), Paediatric Education for Nursing Staff \(PENS\) and Paramedic Paediatric Emergency Medicine \(PARA PEM\) courses](#)



- Case based education resources
- How to use the Queensland ED Paediatric Sepsis Pathway with case studies

## How to order

The pathway can be ordered directly via [Winc](#) using the code below. Please speak to your cost centre manager or local Health Information Manager (HIM) to arrange purchasing of the forms.

Form ID	Form Title	Winc Code
SW866	ED Paediatric Sepsis Pathway for Tertiary and Secondary Facilities	1NY37615
SW944	ED Paediatric Sepsis Pathway for Rural and Remote Facilities	1NY37617

## Next phase

The next phase of project will implement the paediatric sepsis pathway into inpatient areas and primary care. This will include targeted education and support for HHS (including regional and rural facilities), primary care, and families; State-wide support system networks for care closer to home during and after sepsis.

The project is developing a digital pathway equivalent for EDs and inpatient areas in HHS’s with iEMR. This will include decision support tools and will allow for local monitoring and feedback of performance.

## Key Documents

- [Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQ\) Guide](#)
- [Australian Sepsis Network National Action Plan](#)
- [Surviving sepsis campaign international guidelines](#)
- [Global Burden of Disease Study](#)
- [Children’s Resuscitation Emergency Drug Dosage \(CREDD\) Education](#)

## More Information

For more information about the Paediatric Sepsis Clinical Pathways phone (07) 3068 1593 or email [paediatricsepsis@health.qld.gov.au](mailto:paediatricsepsis@health.qld.gov.au)