Association of British Paediatric Nurses
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Committed to promoting the development of children's nursing through evidence based information about practice and education

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World Sepsis Day 13th September 2026

The global sepsis initiative centres on **"Stop Sepsis, Save Lives."** The Global Sepsis Alliance theme for 2026 is: **Universal Sepsis Care for Newborns, Children, and Women.** The Association of British Paediatric Nurses (ABPN) is proud to support this vital day which highlights the importance and significance of sepsis and the impact sepsis has on children and young people and their families.

Worldwide, around 20 million children under the age of 5 and 26 million women die from Sepsis each year[1], making early recognition a key priority. In the UK, approximately 2000 children die each year and that is approximately 2-3 children every day[2]. These distressing statistics are a stark reminder that signs and symptoms in babies, children and young people are not always clear to detect.

Sepsis in under 16s is defined as *"a clinical syndrome caused by a dysregulated host response to severe infection"*[3]. Sepsis outcomes in children are dependent on early recognition which is crucial for effective treatment to commence. Awareness of sepsis and signs and symptoms is paramount given that 70% of children seeking emergency care are presenting in non-paediatric specialist settings[4].

Children's nurses play a vital role in improving outcomes by:

- Recognising and acting on early symptoms such as: increase temperature, increase work of breathing, change in conscious level, observations in normal parameters despite a history of being unwell; observations outside of normal parameters, pre-existing risk factors (surgery, injury or under 1 year of age), parental or nurse concern, and the golden hour (antimicrobial treatment within one hour of recognition).
- Raising and promoting awareness to families and colleagues in all healthcare settings.
- If in doubt "*think sepsis*".

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[1] Global Sepsis Alliance and World Sepsis Day Organisation (2026) What Is Sepsis? — World Sepsis Day - September 13

[2] Global Sepsis Alliance and World Sepsis Day Organisation (2026) What Is Sepsis? — World Sepsis Day - September 13

[3] Miranda, M. and Nadel, S. (2023) **Pediatric Sepsis: a Summary of Current Definitions and Management Recommendations** Curr Pediatr Rep 2023 May 9;11(2):29–39. doi: 10.1007/s40124-023-00286-3

[4] Miranda, M. and Nadel, S. (2023) **Pediatric Sepsis: a Summary of Current Definitions and Management Recommendations** Curr Pediatr Rep 2023 May 9;11(2):29–39. doi: 10.1007/s40124-023-00286-3

On World Sepsis Day 2026, the ABPN calls on all healthcare practitioners, educators, policymakers, and professional bodies to:

- Promote prevention of infections: prevent infection in the first place, which can be done by: clean water, hand hygiene, vaccinations.
- Ensure that all staff are aware of sepsis in children and young people.
- Understand and address health disparities which may impede early recognition and treatment.
- efforts to control the spread of antimicrobial-resistant pathogens.
- Implementation of paediatric sepsis guidelines in all healthcare settings.
- Timely management and escalation are critical to prevent further deterioration.
- Promotion and invoking of Martha's Rule[5] if concerns are not being addressed.

> *"As Children's Nurses, we must ensure that we and our colleagues, listen to the concerns of parents and carers who know their children best. Really, listen."*
>
> Ellie Forbes – ABPN Honorary Secretary, Member and Children's Nurse

Notes for editors

The term child refers to infants, children, young people and young adults up to 25 years of age

The ABPN recognises that primary and community services, as well as child public health and mental health services, including school nurses and health visitors also have a key role in supporting children, young people and families.

The ABPN is the oldest children's nursing association in the world, established in 1938. Our wide membership includes experts in clinical practice, education, leadership and research.

Website: www.abpn-uk.com

Blue Sky: @abpn-childnurse.bsky.social
Facebook: Association of British Paediatric Nurses
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[5] See https://www.england.nhs.uk/patient-safety/marthas-rule/