

News story: NHS improvements to help fight sepsis

Health Secretary Jeremy Hunt has announced new measures to help combat sepsis.

Thousands of nurses, care home staff and pharmacists will be told how to check for signs and symptoms of sepsis, as part of a new NHS plan to improve treatment of the condition.

Known as a 'silent killer' because it is difficult to spot, sepsis kills around 37,000 people in England every year. Triggered by an infection, sepsis causes the body's immune system to go into overdrive, setting off a series of reactions that can lead to organ failure and, in some cases, death.

In 2015 the NHS launched the first national action plan to tackle sepsis across England. It focused on hospitals and GP surgeries.

Today's announcement directs help at the wider health system. It aims to reduce the number of people affected by the condition while also improving how sepsis is tracked and recorded.

The new measures include:

- a clear definition of adult sepsis for clinicians, so sepsis is identified and recorded more quickly
- educational materials to ensure awareness among all primary care, pharmacists and health care professionals
- targeting care homes, pharmacists and other areas of the NHS which deal with frail and older people to prevent sepsis

Jeremy Hunt, Secretary of State for Health said:

We want the NHS to be the safest healthcare system in the world, and our ability to diagnose and treat sepsis effectively is a key litmus test of progress. While the NHS has taken major steps in recent years to improve how it responds to sepsis – actions that have saved nearly 1,000 lives – there is still more work to do to protect the many thousands who develop this dangerous condition each year.

We need every part of our health system on the highest possible alert for sepsis, and this new plan will ensure more health professionals get the training, advice and targeted support to tackle this silent killer.

Sir Bruce Keogh, National Medical Director for NHS England said:

Since the publication of our first plan in 2015 a lot has been done and this additional set of proposed actions reflects the desire of health professionals to tackle this dangerous condition.