

# Increased awareness around sepsis can save lives

Sometimes wrongly referred to as blood poisoning, sepsis is the life-threatening response of a patient's own body to a pre-existing infection and has been found to be a contributing factor to 1/3 of all hospital deaths.<sup>1</sup> However, there are ways to prevent sepsis and raising awareness about the condition is the first step towards saving lives.

This is why the Private Organization for Patient Safety and the World Health Organization (WHO) have centered the theme for this year's May 5th World Hand Hygiene Day (WHHD) on the ways of preventing sepsis through appropriate hand hygiene. This scheme is part of a bigger debate that goes beyond hand hygiene and includes different interventions to prevent sepsis that can be split into the following:

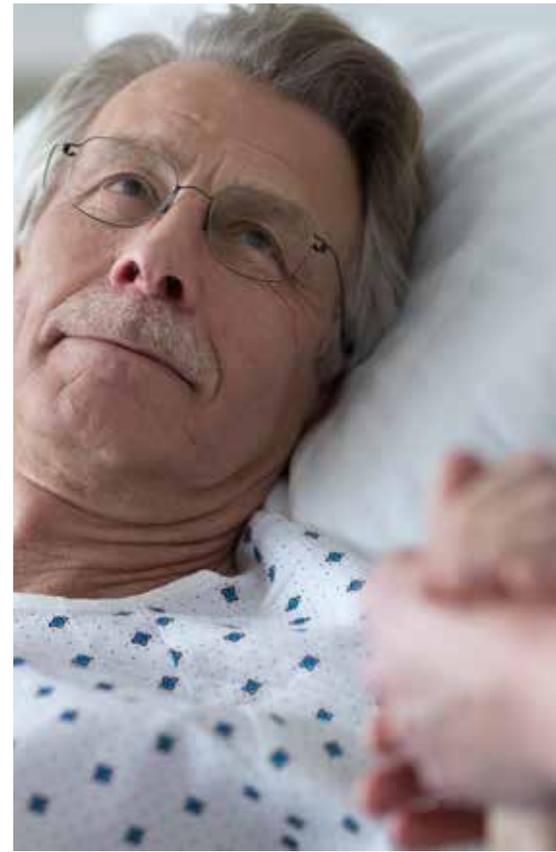
As sepsis is the body's response to an infection, making sure that a patient does not initially develop that infection is the first step to prevention. Infection prevention encompasses surveillance and early detection such as identifying high-risk patients and being proactive. Through careful **preventive care**, you can boost your patient's general health and the body's ability to fight. Simple actions include appropriate management of skin conditions, especially in high-risk patients to reduce transmission of infections or making sure that patients are up to date with their vaccinations.

If, despite your best care, a patient still develops an infection – time is of the essence! In order to prevent and avoid sepsis, the infection needs to be **closely monitored and managed**. Make sure that you are familiar with and apply your local antimicrobial stewardship guidelines to ensure that your patient's condition does not evolve into critical state.

As 1 in 10 patients worldwide will acquire at least one healthcare associated infection (HAI) that can develop into sepsis, appropriate **hand hygiene** plays a crucial part in the prevention of microbial cross-transmission from HCPs to patients.<sup>2,3</sup> It has been observed that hand hygiene alone can reduce up to 40% of healthcare-related infections, however, 61% of healthcare workers are still not adhering to best hand hygiene practices.<sup>4,5,6</sup> By applying the WHO's '5 moments of hand hygiene' tool, you can make a difference and perform hygiene at appropriate times.

*"With up to two in every five cases of HAIs caused by cross-infection via the hands of health care workers,<sup>7</sup> World Hand Hygiene Day is an opportunity to remind and inspire health-care professionals about how critical hand hygiene is to help reduce healthcare-associated infections,"* says Carolyn Berland, Senior Scientist at Essity.

Appropriate **wound care** also has a decisive role in the prevention of sepsis, as any break in the skin can allow bacteria to enter and cause an infection. Even though all wounds, simple or complex, need to be treated, this is especially true for chronic wounds in high-risk patients with weakened immune sys-



**Each year sepsis causes on average six million deaths worldwide. It's the primary cause of death from infection and is more common than heart attacks."**<sup>8,9</sup>

tems. You should always monitor wounds for signs of infections and ensure they are appropriately cleansed between dressing changes.

In order to support the WHO's efforts around increased sepsis awareness and provide tools to help prevent sepsis among your patients, Essity and its brands Tork and Leukomed have developed a campaign in the shape of a 3-step call to action: **Think** hygiene. **Act** to prevent. **Care** for patients.



**Waste no time in acting to prevent sepsis by visiting [www.tork.ie/WHHD](http://www.tork.ie/WHHD) to learn more about the Think.Act.Care. campaign and download the materials.**

References: **1.** Liu et al. JAMA. 2014;312(1):90-92 **2.** WHO. HAIs Fact sheet. 2016 (Online) [http://www.who.int/gpsc/country\\_work/gpsc\\_ccisc\\_fact\\_sheet\\_en.pdf?ua=1](http://www.who.int/gpsc/country_work/gpsc_ccisc_fact_sheet_en.pdf?ua=1). **3.** WHO. Guidelines on Hand Hygiene. 2009 (online) [http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/44102/9789241597906\\_eng.pdf;jsessionid=EF3EBD475307437129620344CC1DEE66?sequence=1](http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/44102/9789241597906_eng.pdf;jsessionid=EF3EBD475307437129620344CC1DEE66?sequence=1). **4.** Kampf G, et al. Dtsch Arztebl Int. 2009;106(40):649-655. **5.** WHO. Evidence of hand hygiene to reduce transmission and infections by multi-drug resistant organisms in health-care settings. 2013 (online) [http://www.who.int/gpsc/5may/MDRO\\_literature-review.pdf](http://www.who.int/gpsc/5may/MDRO_literature-review.pdf). **6.** WHO. Health Care Without Avoidable Infections: The critical role of infection prevention and control. 2016 (online) <http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/246235/WHO-HIS-SDS-2016.10-eng.pdf?sequence=1>. **7.** Weber DJ, et al. Am J Infect Control. 2010; 38(5 Suppl 1):S25-33. **8.** Global Sepsis Alliance. Resolutions. 2017 (online) <https://www.srif.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/GSA-Resolution-Announcement-May-2017-News-Release.pdf>. **9.** UK Sepsis Trust. Sepsis Manual. 2018 (online) [https://sepsistrust.org/wpcontent/uploads/2018/02/Sepsis\\_Manual\\_2017\\_final\\_v7-red.pdf](https://sepsistrust.org/wpcontent/uploads/2018/02/Sepsis_Manual_2017_final_v7-red.pdf).