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# Paediatric early warning system – sepsis factsheet

Paediatric early warning systems aim to detect patient deterioration as early as possible for all causes.

Early identification of tamariki who have sepsis, or who are at risk of developing it, means appropriate treatment can start. This is an important step in reducing sepsis morbidity and mortality.

There is no universally accepted and evidence-based trigger tool for the early identification of sepsis in tamariki, however tamariki with sepsis do display signs of deterioration.

Many hospitals in Aotearoa New Zealand have sepsis programmes and have pragmatically included a paediatric early warning score-related trigger to consider sepsis. For example, Te Whatu Ora Waitaha Canterbury uses a total paediatric early warning score (PEW score) of
≥ 5, and the Sepsis Trust NZ [Paediatric Sepsis screening and action tool](https://www.sepsis.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/Sepsis-Screening-Chart-PAEDIATRIC.pdf) uses any PEWS vital sign scoring 3.

The new national paediatric vital signs chart may have an effect on these triggers because the scoring parameters to generate the total PEW score have been adjusted slightly. For example, in some locations the red zone single parameter score has changed from 3 to 4.

Individual hospitals that use PEWS-related triggers for sepsis may need to adjust their sepsis pathways and education.

Ongoing education about the following remains very important:

* Paediatric early warning systems detect deterioration but cannot provide a diagnosis.
* Tamariki can be very unwell, including having sepsis, with a low PEW score.
* Paediatric early warning systems should not be the only method used to detect sepsis.

The national paediatric vital signs chart will provide a great opportunity to develop the evidence base for the role of PEWS triggers in the early detection of sepsis.

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