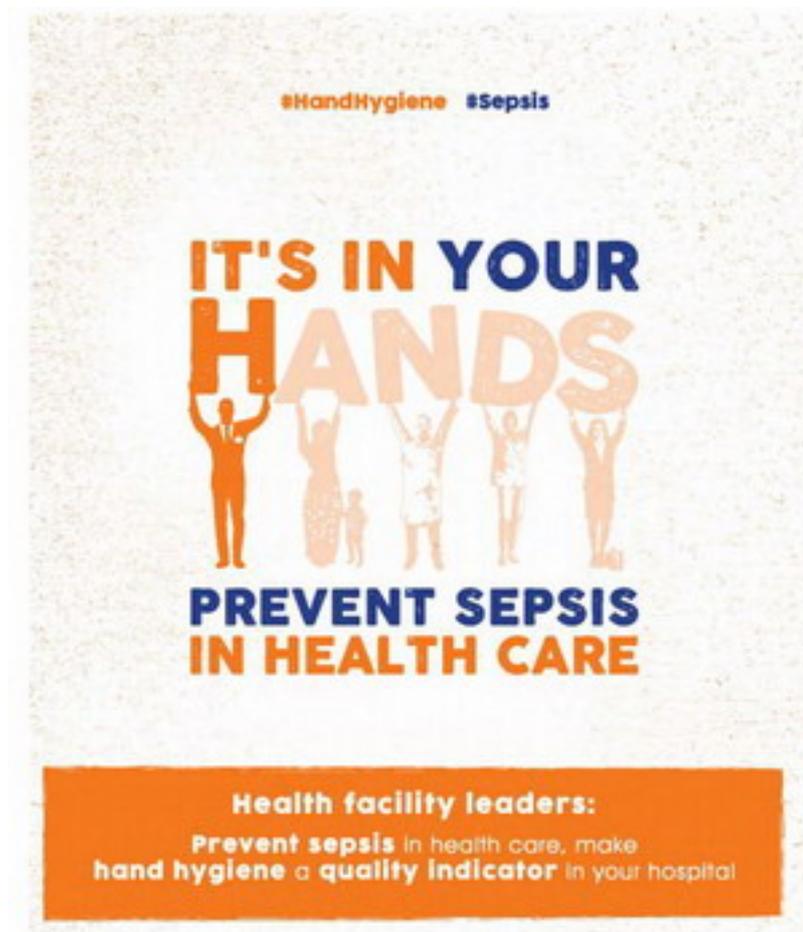


“It’s in your hands – prevent sepsis in health care”



3 May 2018, Cairo – World Hand Hygiene Day, marked globally on 5 May, highlights the importance of hand hygiene in health care. The slogan of this year’s campaign is “It’s in your hands – prevent sepsis in health care”, illustrating the important relationship between good infection prevention and control practices, such as washing your hands, and preventing sepsis. The World Health Organization (WHO) calls on health facilities to prevent health care-associated sepsis through hand hygiene and action on infection prevention and control.

Sepsis is a life-threatening condition that arises when the body’s response to infection causes injury to its own tissues and organs. If not recognized early and managed promptly, it can lead to septic shock, multiple organ failure and death. It is a serious complication of infection, particularly in low- and middle-income countries where it represents a major cause of maternal and neonatal morbidity and mortality.

Sepsis is estimated to affect more than 30 million patients every year worldwide and global rates of sepsis are thought to be growing rapidly. At the Seventieth World Health Assembly, Member States adopted a resolution on improving the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of sepsis. According to the resolution, WHO will assist Member States by developing guidance for the prevention and management of sepsis, and supporting countries to establish the necessary laboratory capacity, strategies and tools to address sepsis.

Infections acquired during health care delivery are common and are a risk factor for developing sepsis, but can be prevented. Effective hand hygiene plays a key role. On World Hand Hygiene Day, the focus for everyone should be on prevention of sepsis in health care by highlighting good infection prevention and control practices to reduce the spread of infections and save the lives of millions. Without behaviour change, sepsis will remain a major threat.

“Health care-associated infections cause harm and suffering that are easily avoided. They also result in additional financial burden and sometimes even long-term disabilities or death” says Dr Jaouad Mahjour, acting WHO Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean, “I urge all health care workers to ensure adequate hand hygiene and all health care facilities to join in the ‘SAVE LIVES: Clean Your Hands’ campaign and commit to improving hand hygiene practices to help save more lives”.

Through this year’s World Hand Hygiene Day campaign, WHO is calling on countries and health care facilities to strengthen infection prevention and control programmes based on WHO guidelines. These include a set of core components for successful implementation of national and facility-level infection prevention and control programmes. WHO will work with partners to improve access to quality, safe and affordable treatments for sepsis and tools for infection prevention and control, including immunization, particularly in developing countries.

WHO calls on infection prevention and control leaders to become champions in promoting hand hygiene to prevent sepsis in health care. Hospital administrators are called on to prevent sepsis in health care and to make hand hygiene a quality indicator in their hospitals. Adequate hand hygiene reduces the risk of health care-associated infections and has the potential to save 8 million lives every year in hospitals alone. Clean hands make the health system a safer place to receive care.

### **Related links**

[Message from Dr Jaouad Mahjour, acting Regional Director for the WHO Eastern](#)

[Mediterranean, on the occasion of World Hand Hygiene Day, "Save lives: clean your hands"](#)  
5 May 2018

[Arabic](#) | [French](#)

[World Hand Hygiene Day 2018](#)

[Sepsis factsheet](#)

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