

Septicemia Definition

Septicemia is the presence of bacteria in the blood (bacteremia) and is often associated with severe infections.

Causes

- Poor aseptic technique during insertion or site care
- Severe phlebitis
- Poorly secure line which allows manipulation of catheter
- Prolonged dwell time of catheter
- Patient that is immunocompromised
- Contaminated drug or fluid

Signs and Symptoms of Septicemia

- Sudden onset of chills, fever, general malaise, and headache
- Increased pulse and respirations as fever increases
- Flushed face, backache, nausea, vomiting, and hypotension are possible
- Symptoms become severe, with cyanosis, increased respirations, and hyperventilation if condition goes undetected or untreated
- Vascular collapse, shock, and death as organisms overcome the system
- Usually no visible signs of infection at IV site

Intervention

- Notify physician immediately
- Follow physician's orders which may include removing catheter, blood cultures, and antibiotics
- Hospitalization likely in most cases
- Monitor vitals

Preventive Measures

- Wash hands thoroughly before initiating infusion therapy or handling any part of the intravenous system
- Check all solution for clarity, cracks, and presence of a vacuum
- Cleanse site with antimicrobial agent (povidone-iodine, alcohol, or chlorhexidine)
- Secure catheter to prevent in and out movement
- Change dressing, tubing, and site per protocol
- Use aseptic technique for all procedures
- Change injection caps with each dressing change and after each blood draw

Reference

Core Curriculum for Infusion Nurses Edition 3; Lippincott Williams & Wilkins 2004