

SUSPECT SEPSIS, SAVE LIVES

WHAT IS SEPSIS?

Sepsis is the body's overwhelming and life-threatening response to infection, which can lead to tissue damage, organ failure, and death. Sepsis is a medical emergency that requires early detection and treatment for survival.

WHY SHOULD I BE CONCERNED ABOUT SEPSIS?

Sepsis can occur to anyone at any time. Any type of infection can lead to your body developing sepsis. Sepsis not only kills thousands of people, it leaves many with long-lasting or permanent changes to their body, such as amputations, organs that don't work properly, psychological distress, and more.

WHAT ARE THE RISK FACTORS FOR SEPSIS?

While anyone can get sepsis, some people are at higher risk. These include the very young and the elderly, people with certain chronic diseases, like cancer and liver disease, and those with impaired or weakened immune systems. Ask your doctor if you have a higher risk.

CAN SEPSIS BE TREATED?

Yes, sepsis can be treated but it must be suspected first. People with sepsis must receive antibiotics and intravenous fluids as quickly as possible. The antibiotics fight the infection while the fluids work to help your blood provide oxygen and nutrients to your body's tissues and organs.

CAN SEPSIS BE PREVENTED?

We don't know yet exactly why sepsis occurs. We do know that by limiting your exposure to infections, you may reduce your risk of developing sepsis. This means:

- Washing your hands thoroughly and frequently.
- Caring for wounds, keeping them clean to avoid infection.
- Treating all infections, such as urinary tract infections and pneumonia, seriously.
- Taking antibiotics as directed.
- Staying up-to-date with vaccinations against illnesses like influenza and pneumonia.

Please keep in mind that you can develop sepsis without even knowing you have an infection.

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I AM WORRIED THAT I OR SOMEONE I CARE ABOUT HAS SEPSIS?

Unfortunately, there is no single sign or symptom of sepsis. The most common report from sepsis survivors is that the symptoms they were feeling—fever, chills, pain, shortness of breath—were the worst they had ever felt. Other warning signs to pay attention to are dizziness, confusion, or being less responsive or unresponsive. This is particularly important if there have been any signs of infection or injury before the signs of illness began.

If you are worried about sepsis and you are at home, you should seek emergency help or call 9-1-1. Studies suggest early care by first responders can make it more likely you will survive. Tell healthcare providers, "I am concerned about sepsis." This gives them a specific concern to address. Sepsis is also a

common complication among people hospitalized for other reasons. If you are feeling worse after surgery or a loved one is not getting better, insist that sepsis be considered.

WHY HAVEN'T I HEARD ABOUT SEPSIS?

You aren't alone. A 2017 Sepsis Alliance survey found just over half of American adults had ever heard of sepsis. Since sepsis may occur in patients battling other conditions, such as cancer, a lack of awareness of sepsis makes it easier to refer to these deaths as complications of the prior condition rather than from sepsis. Sepsis is also often incorrectly referred to in the media as "blood poisoning"—increasing confusion.

WHAT CAN I DO TO HELP?

Education and awareness about sepsis – both recognizing sepsis and treating it – is vital. You can help by:

-  **SAYING THE WORD**
If you suspect you or a loved one is developing sepsis, ask your doctor or nurse right away and mention the word "sepsis."
-  **SPREADING THE WORD**
Tell friends, co-workers, and loved ones to look out for the warning signs of sepsis.
-  **SUPPORTING THE CAUSE**
Help Sepsis Alliance get the word out about the dangers of sepsis through volunteering, hosting a fundraiser, or making a donation.

Please go to [Sepsis.org](https://www.sepsis.org) to learn more.

TOP 10 THINGS EVERYONE SHOULD KNOW ABOUT SEPSIS

1. Sepsis is a life-threatening condition that arises when the body's response to infection injures its own tissues and organs.
2. Sepsis is a medical emergency. Minutes matter.
3. No one is immune. Sepsis can strike anyone regardless of age, race, or ethnicity.
4. Despite an estimated 1.7 million cases a year, just over half of Americans have heard of sepsis.
5. Sepsis kills more people in the U.S. than breast, lung, and prostate cancer combined, and kills more children in the US than pediatric cancers.
6. There is no single sign or symptom of sepsis.
7. Warning signs can include fever, shortness of breath, confusion, and sleepiness.
8. There is no FDA-approved therapy for sepsis. Immediate treatment with antibiotics and fluids could cut the number of deaths by more than half.
9. Sepsis results in an average of 38 amputations each day.
10. More than half of sepsis survivors suffer from worsened cognitive (mental) and/or physical function.

If you are worried about sepsis, tell your health care provider: "I am concerned about sepsis."

The information in this pamphlet is intended for educational purposes only. Sepsis Alliance does not represent or guarantee that this information is applicable to any specific patient's care or treatment. The educational content here does not constitute medical advice from a physician and is not to be used as a substitute for treatment or advice from a practicing physician or other healthcare provider. Always consult your physician or healthcare provider regarding any questions about sepsis.

ANYONE CAN GET SEPSIS AT ANY TIME

If you develop a combination of the following symptoms:

-  **Temperature:** Higher or lower than normal
-  **Infection:** May have signs and symptoms of an infection
-  **Mental Decline:** Confused, sleepy, difficult to rouse
-  **Extremely Ill:** Severe pain, discomfort, shortness of breath

CALL 9-1-1 OR GO TO A HOSPITAL AND SAY "I AM CONCERNED ABOUT SEPSIS"

TO LEARN MORE ABOUT SEPSIS, VISIT SEPSIS.ORG.

©2020 Sepsis Alliance

