

Information About Sepsis for Individuals and Families

How will you know if you are seriously ill?

Sepsis is a life-threatening complication of an infection.

When you get an infection, your immune system releases chemicals into your blood to fight it. The chemicals sometimes cause inflammation throughout the body, which can lead to blood clots and leaky blood vessels. This impairs blood flow, which damages the body's organs by depriving them of nutrients and oxygen.

Sepsis is a medical emergency and must be treated quickly and properly for survival.

Infection Can Lead to Sepsis

Any kind of infection—bacterial, viral, parasitic, or fungal— can lead to sepsis.

- Infections of the skin, lungs, urinary tract, abdomen (such as appendicitis), or other part of the body can trigger sepsis.
- Pneumonia, central line-associated bloodstream infections, urinary tract infections, and surgical site infections can sometimes lead to sepsis.
- MRSA infections of the skin and soft tissue can also lead to sepsis.

Reduce the Risk of Sepsis

Sepsis, especially among older adults, is subtle and the rapid progression makes recognition and treatment imperative. Early diagnosis increases the chance of surviving acute sepsis.

There are things people can do to reduce the risk of sepsis, including practicing regular hand hygiene and receiving regular vaccinations (flu and pneumonia).

Sepsis can strike anyone at any age. Those most at risk include:

- Infants and young children
- Those with a weakened immune system, often because of treatments such as chemotherapy for cancer, steroids (e.g. cortisone) for inflammatory conditions
- People over 50 years of age
- Those with wounds or a physical injury

Stop Sepsis Save Lives

If you have an infection together with the following symptoms it might mean sepsis has started:

- Weakness
- Fever and/or chills
- Skin rash
- Rapid heartbeat
- Rapid breathing
- Sudden confusion, disorientation, lethargy
- Low blood pressure



If you or someone around you has these symptoms, go to the nearest hospital and insist on an examination for sepsis.



