

Sepsis

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Sepsis is a serious medical condition triggered by an infection that can lead to serious illness or death.

Infections that lead to sepsis include:

- lung (pneumonia)
- urinary tract (kidney)
- skin
- gut (appendicitis).

Sepsis needs to be treated right away. It can cause your organs to fail and lead to death.

Who Can Get Sepsis

Anyone can get sepsis. People who have an increased risk include:

- people who have weakened immune systems
- people age 65 or older
- babies
- people who have chronic (long-term) illnesses such as diabetes, cancer or kidney disease
- anyone who has a severe burn.

You can get sepsis anywhere, including in the hospital or at home. Sepsis can even occur while you recover from an infection.

Signs and Symptoms of Sepsis

Signs and symptoms of sepsis include:

- fever
- chills, shivering or feeling very cold
- clammy or sweaty skin
- fast breathing and high heart rate
- feeling short of breath
- rash
- confusion or disorientation
- a lot of pain or discomfort.

What To Do

- **If you are in the hospital:** tell a member of your health care team as soon as you start having symptoms.
- **If you are at home:** call 911 or have someone drive you to a hospital Emergency Department.

How Your Doctor Confirms Sepsis

- The doctor will check you for a fever, low blood pressure, fast heart rate and fast breathing rate.
- You will have lab tests (blood, mucus, urine or all) to check for signs of infection.
- You may have X-rays or scans to look at your heart or other organs.

(over)

How to Treat Sepsis

- You need to be treated in the hospital.
- You will receive antibiotics (medicine).
- You may receive other medicines to help your heart, kidneys or lungs.
- It is important to complete your antibiotics as directed by your health care provider.
- You may need extra oxygen, intravenous (IV) fluids or other types of treatment.

Your doctor will talk with you and members of your care circle (family members or friends) about your treatment.

Long-term Effects of Sepsis

Many people who get sepsis recover and their lives return to normal.

Some people may have long-lasting organ damage. For example, sepsis can lead to kidney failure in someone who had kidney problems.

How to Prevent Sepsis

- Get vaccinated against the flu, pneumococcal pneumonia and any other infections that could lead to sepsis.
- Prevent infections that can lead to sepsis by:
 - keeping scrapes and wounds clean
 - washing your hands often
 - making sure people who care for you wash their hands before touching you
- Get help right away if you have the signs and symptoms listed on page 1.

Adapted from the National Institutes of Health and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.