

## Sepsis

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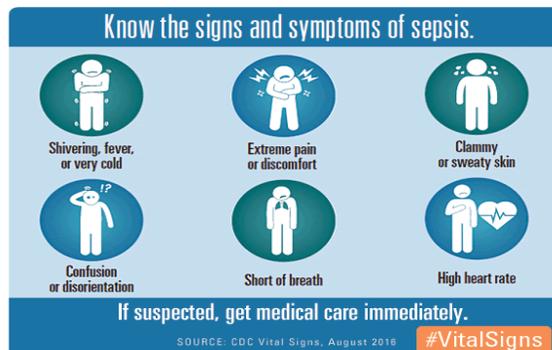
### What is Sepsis?

Sepsis is a complication caused by the body's overwhelming and life-threatening response to an infection, which can lead to tissue damage, organ failure, and death. It can often be associated with infections of the lungs (e.g., pneumonia), urinary tract (e.g., kidneys), skin, and gut. A CDC evaluation found that more than 90% of adults and 70% of children who developed sepsis had a health condition that may have put them at risk (<https://www.cdc.gov/sepsis/basic/qa.html>).

### Signs and Symptoms of Sepsis

There is no single sign or symptom of sepsis. It is, rather a combination of symptoms. Since sepsis is the result of an infection, symptoms can include infection signs (diarrhea, vomiting, sore throat, etc.), as well as any of the symptoms below:

- Shivering, fever, or very cold
- Extreme pain or discomfort
- Clammy or sweaty skin
- Confusion or disorientation
- Short of breath
- High heart rate



**VitalSigns™**  
http://www.cdc.gov/vitalsigns/sepsis



### Who is at Risk?

Anyone can develop sepsis, but those who have a compromised immune system, people with chronic conditions (e.g., diabetes), children, infants and the elderly are most vulnerable. Most



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often, sepsis occurs in people aged 65 years or older or less than a year old, have a weakened immune system, or have chronic medical conditions (e.g., diabetes).

### **Sepsis Diagnosis and Treatment**

In earlier stages, sepsis can be hard to diagnose because the symptoms are the same as many other conditions. Doctors utilize physical findings, such as fever, low blood pressure, increased heart rate, and increased breathing rate, and lab tests that check for signs of infections and organ damage to diagnose a person with sepsis.

Treatment is carried out in the hospital, with antibiotics as soon as possible. The goal is to treat the infection and prevent any other complications. Doctors want to keep the vital organs working and prevent a drop in blood pressure.

Many people fully recover from sepsis and return to their normal lives. There is the potential for people to experience permanent organ damage if someone who already may have illness.

### **Prevention of Sepsis**

To prevent sepsis, you must first prevent the initial infection.

The CDC recommends:

- Vaccination against the flu, pneumonia, and any other infections that could lead to sepsis
- Prevent infections that can lead to sepsis by cleaning scrapes and wounds, and practicing good hygiene (e.g., hand washing)
- Know that time matters. If you have a severe infection, look for signs and symptoms like: shivering, fever, or very cold, extreme pain or discomfort, clammy or sweaty skin, confusion or disorientation, short of breath, and high heart rate
- <https://www.cdc.gov/sepsis/basic/qa.html>



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## WHAT CAN YOU DO TO **PREVENT** SEPSIS?

-  **1 Get vaccinated** against the flu, pneumonia, and any other infections that could lead to sepsis. Talk to your doctor for more information.
-  **2 Prevent infections** that can lead to sepsis by
  - **Cleaning** scrapes and wounds
  - Practicing good **hygiene** (e.g., hand washing)
-  **3 Know that time matters.** If you have a severe infection, **look for signs** like: shivering, fever, or very cold, extreme pain or discomfort, clammy or sweaty skin, confusion or disorientation, short of breath, rapid breathing, and high heart rate.

### Other Tips:

- Follow Universal Protocols
- Environmental hygiene. Use home disinfectants on frequently touched surfaces (handles, knobs, switches, tables, etc.)
- Proper hand hygiene. 20-seconds with soap and water scrubbing all surfaces of the hands, use Purell in an amount the size of a quarter and scrub all surfaces of your hands until they are dry.

### Recommendations

Awareness of risk is important. Be alert to symptoms of changes in a person's health status and seek guidance from a health professional for any changes. With a change in any person's health status, results in acute care through an ED visit, Urgent Care visit, or hospitalization, be sure to follow up on any recommended changes from the PCP or licensed provider.

You should also consider including the following in the individuals care plan:

- Attend regular appointments with a health care provider including surgeons and other specialists, as recommended.
- Educate staff and regarding signs and symptoms of infection or sepsis, call doctor or go immediately to the emergency room if someone has those signs or symptoms.
- Follow all protocols and guidance from health professionals.
- Assure competency of the staff for implementing all recommendations made by health care providers.

### Resources



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CDC sepsis information- [http://www.cdc.gov/sepsis/pdfs/sepsis\\_infographic\\_final.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/sepsis/pdfs/sepsis_infographic_final.pdf)

CDC sepsis fact sheet- <http://www.cdc.gov/sepsis/pdfs/sepsis-fact-sheet.pdf>

