

Sepsis

What is Sepsis?

Sometimes called blood poisoning, sepsis is the body's often deadly response to infection.

- Sepsis must be suspected and identified early for treatment to be effective.
- Patients are diagnosed with sepsis when they develop signs of their body's response to an infection.
- Sepsis is a medical emergency. It is an equal opportunity killer, striking anyone at any time.

Any type of infection can cause sepsis – including pneumonia, urinary tract infections and influenza. Doctors draw from a list of signs and symptoms in order to make the diagnosis. These include abnormal temperature, fast heart rate, fast breathing, and/or abnormal white blood cell count.

Sepsis is severe when there are signs of the body's organs shutting down, called dysfunction. This includes *hypoxemia* (too little oxygen in the blood), *oliguria* (making too little urine), lactic acidosis (build up of lactic acid), elevated liver enzymes (too much of certain proteins from the liver), altered cerebral function (confusion, unconsciousness) and septic shock (low blood pressure).

Treatment

All patients need immediate treatment with antibiotics and fluids. Other treatments may be appropriate for certain patients. Almost all sepsis patients require a hospital stay and many need treatment in an intensive care unit (ICU).

Did You Know?

- Any infection can cause sepsis. Including infections after routine surgery, as well as simple injuries, such as scrapes or nicks and cuts.
- In the U.S., nearly one million new cases of sepsis occur each year, increasing by nine percent every year.
- Sepsis kills more than 215,000 people every year: one person every 2.5 minutes in the U.S. alone.
- 40% of patients diagnosed with severe sepsis do not survive.
- Some sepsis can be prevented by getting vaccinations and good hand washing.
- Anyone over the age of 65 is at a higher risk of developing sepsis and of dying from sepsis.
- More children die of sepsis than from cancer in the United States.
- There is very low awareness of sepsis. Only 33% of Americans have ever heard the word "sepsis."
- If worried that you or a loved one has sepsis, say to your doctor, "I am concerned about sepsis."

For additional sepsis information, visit sepsisalliance.org.

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