



# SEPSIS AND BACTERIAL INFECTIONS

Bacteria are all around us. Most of them are harmless and many are helpful. For example, bacteria in your intestines (gut) help break down the food you eat so it can be digested. However, some types of bacteria can cause infections, which in turn can cause sepsis.

Sometimes incorrectly called blood poisoning, sepsis is the body's often deadly response to infection or injury. Sepsis kills and disables millions and requires early suspicion and treatment for survival.

Sepsis and septic shock can result from an infection anywhere in the body, such as pneumonia, influenza, or urinary tract infections. Bacterial infections are the most common cause of sepsis. Worldwide, one-third of people who develop sepsis die. Many who do survive are left with life-changing effects, such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), chronic pain and fatigue, organ dysfunction (organs don't work properly) and/or amputations.

## EXAMPLES OF BACTERIAL INFECTIONS

Bacteria must enter your body for them to cause an infection. You can get a bacterial infection through an opening in your skin, such as a cut, a bug bite, or a surgical wound. Bacteria may also enter your body through your airway and cause infections like bacterial pneumonia.

Other types of bacterial infections include urinary tract infections (including bladder and kidney infections) and dental abscesses, as well as infections caused by MRSA, Group B Streptococcus, and C. Difficile, to name just a few. Infections can also occur in open wounds, such as pressure ulcers (bed sores). Pressure ulcers are caused by constant pressure on the skin for extended periods of time or rubbing. For example, a senior who is bedridden could develop sores on the coccyx (tailbone) area, elbows, heels, or anywhere else where there is constant contact with a bed or adapted "easy chair."

## SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

Bacterial infections present in many ways, depending on the part of the body affected. If you have bacterial pneumonia, you may experience:

- Fever
- Cough, with phlegm
- Shortness of breath
- Sweating
- Shaking chills
- Headache
- Muscle pain
- Fatigue
- Chest pain with breathing

If you have a urinary tract infection, you may have some of these symptoms:

- Sudden and extreme urges to void (pass urine)
- Frequent urges to void
- Burning, irritation or pain as you void
- A feeling of not emptying your bladder completely
- A feeling of pressure in your abdomen or lower back
- Thick or cloudy urine – it may contain blood
- Fever

The common symptoms with most bacterial infections are:

- Fever
- Chills
- Pain or discomfort in the infected area

## PREVENTION

Not all infections can be prevented, but the chances of spreading bacterial infections can be greatly reduced by following these tips:

- Wash your hands often, particularly if you are in a healthcare facility
- Keep wounds cleaned and covered
- Avoid sharing personal items, such as razors

## TREATMENT

Most often, treatment for a bacterial infection is with antibiotics. They could be taken orally (by pill, liquid or capsule), by injection, drops, topical (cream or ointment), or intravenously (by IV). The treatment may be very short or it could go as long as several weeks, depending on the type of infection and how it reacts to the antibiotics. Sometimes, the infection will not go away and your doctor may have to try a different type of antibiotic.

## 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.

### What are the signs and symptoms of sepsis?

Sepsis is a toxic response to an infection. There is no single sign or symptom of sepsis. It is, rather, a combination of symptoms. Symptoms can include ANY of the following:

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

**SEPSIS IS A MEDICAL EMERGENCY. IF YOU SUSPECT SEPSIS, CALL 9-1-1 OR GO TO A HOSPITAL RIGHT AWAY.**

**To learn more about sepsis, or to read tributes and survivor stories, visit us online at [Sepsis.org](http://Sepsis.org)**

