



## Sepsis and Children

Sepsis is the number one killer of children and infants worldwide. In the United States, over 40,000 children will develop sepsis and over 5,000 of these children will die. The mortality rate for pediatric sepsis is higher than for pediatric cancer.

### Symptoms.

Sepsis occurs as the result of an infection. There is no one symptom and sometimes children and adults may not even know they have an infection. Early sepsis can mimic many other conditions as symptoms include fever and elevated heart rate and respiratory rates. If your child displays any of the following, seek immediate medical assistance and ask, “Could it be sepsis?”:

- Fast breathing (your child may complain that his/her heart is racing)
- Feels abnormally cold to touch
- Has a rash that does not fade when you press it
- Is very lethargic, irritable, sleepy or difficult to wake
- Looks bluish, mottled or has very pale skin
- Has a fit or convulsion
- Severe muscle pain, or pain in the joints of the wrist, elbows, back, knees, hips, and ankles

A child under 5 who is:

- Uninterested in feeding
- Vomiting
- Has not passed urine for 12 hours

## **Causes.**

Sepsis is caused by infection, most commonly bacterial infections. Cuts and scrape, urinary tract infections, inner ear infections, pneumonia and post-operative infections can all lead to sepsis. The best way to prevent sepsis is to prevent infections.

## **Risk Factors.**

Sepsis can impact anyone—young or old, sick or healthy. Those with increased risk of infection include:

- Children with chronic illness
- Children with weakened immune systems
- Very young children and babies who don't have fully developed immune systems

## **Diagnosis.**

A diagnosis of sepsis is made following a physical evaluation and an examination of the patient's medical history. To confirm a sepsis diagnosis, a doctor will order blood tests. Treatment for sepsis must be provided in a hospital setting.

## **Treatment.**

Time is a critical factor for sepsis patients. Research has shown that every hour delay in treatment increases mortality by eight percent. The treatment for sepsis consists of antibiotics and IV fluids.

## **Prevention.**

Infections and sepsis can be prevented by:

- Staying up to date on vaccinations
- Good hygiene, including regular hand washing
- Caring for cuts and scrapes by washing and covering even minor wounds

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