



What Is Sepsis?

Sepsis is the body's extreme reaction to infection. The body attacks its own organs and tissues, which can lead to tissue damage, organ failure, and death. However, with early diagnosis sepsis can be treated with antibiotics and fluids. More than 1.5 million people in the United States develop sepsis every year, at least 270,000 of them will die. Rapid diagnosis and treatment can prevent up to 80 percent of sepsis fatalities. Sepsis is the most expensive condition treated in U.S. hospitals, costing nearly \$24 billion annually.

Symptoms.

- Rapid breathing and fast heartbeat
- Pale or mottled skin
- Confusion or sleepiness
- Fever and chills
- Feeling the sickest you've ever felt
- Extreme pain

If you detect even a few of these symptoms, seek medical help immediately and ask, "could it be sepsis?"

Causes.

Sepsis results from any kind of infection, most commonly from bacterial infections. Cuts and scrapes, urinary tract infections, pneumonia, and post-operative infections can all lead to sepsis.

Risk Factors.

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

- People with chronic illnesses such as diabetes
- Those with weakened immune systems
- The elderly
- Infants

Diagnosis.

Sepsis is diagnosed by a medical professional following a physical examination, evaluation of medical history, and blood tests.

Treatment.

Sepsis is a medical emergency. Early diagnosis and treatment of sepsis significantly increases one's chances of survival. Sepsis is treated with antibiotics and IV fluids. In most cases broad-spectrum antibiotics will be administered. Once blood tests have been performed, antibiotics that target the particular strain of bacterium responsible for the infection may be used.

Prevention.

The risk of developing sepsis can be reduced by practicing good hygiene, including washing hands regularly, caring for even minor cuts and scrapes using basic first aid techniques (especially keeping wounds clean), and by staying up to date on vaccinations.

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