



BETTERSAFE

WELCOA'S ONLINE BULLETIN FOR YOUR FAMILY'S SAFETY

RECOGNIZING & RESPONDING TO SEPSIS

When you get an infection, whether it's the common cold or flu virus, your body's immune system usually kicks into gear, fighting the culprit until you're back to normal in a few days. But if something goes wrong with your immune response, it could potentially be sepsis, and this can cause big problems.

Sepsis is a potentially life-threatening condition that occurs when the body's response to an infection damages its own tissues. When the infection-fighting processes turn on the body, they cause organs to function poorly and abnormally. The most dangerous stage of sepsis is called septic shock. It can cause multiple organs to fail, including the liver, lungs, and kidneys.

Septic shock begins when the body's response to an infection damages blood vessels. When blood vessels are damaged, your blood pressure can drop very low. Without normal blood flow, your body can't get enough oxygen.

MORE COMMON THAN YOU THINK

Believe it or not, almost 1.7 million people in the U.S. develop sepsis every year. Even with modern treatments, it still kills nearly 270,000 of those who develop it. Many people recover, but some have lifelong damage to the body and brain. For example, doctors can get many people over that first infection that caused the sepsis, but then they're at risk of dying from a second infection because of their weakened condition.



SIGNS & SYMPTOMS

Bacterial infections cause most sepsis cases. But sepsis can also result from other infections, including viral infections, such as COVID-19 or the flu (influenza). Anyone can get sepsis. But certain people are at higher risk, including infants, children, and older adults.

The early symptoms of sepsis are similar to those of many other conditions. These can include fever, chills, rapid breathing or heart rate, a skin rash, confusion, and disorientation. It's important to know the symptoms as **sepsis is a medical emergency**. If you or your loved one has an infection that's not getting better or is getting worse, get medical care immediately.

Researchers are now looking for better ways to diagnose sepsis. One strategy is to use artificial intelligence to predict a patient's risk of sepsis when they have an infection.

TREATMENT & PREVENTION

There are a few medicines that help treat sepsis. Early treatment with antibiotics and intravenous fluids improves chances for survival. Doctors try to stop the infection and support the functions of vital organs. This usually includes giving oxygen and fluids. For now, preventing infections is the best way to avoid sepsis.

SAVE YOURSELF FROM SEPSIS

There's a lot you can do to prevent sepsis and the complications that go along with it:

- » **Take care of yourself.** Do everything you can to stay healthy and prevent infections. Eat well and exercise. Take good care of chronic conditions. Get recommended vaccines.
- » **Practice good hygiene.** Wash your hands. Keep cuts clean and covered until healed.
- » **Recognize the signs of sepsis.** Symptoms can include any one or combination of these: confusion, disorientation, shortness of breath, rapid heart rate, fever, shivering, chills, extreme pain, and clammy or sweaty skin.
- » **Seek professional medical treatment.** Get medical care immediately if you suspect sepsis or have an infection that's not getting better or is getting worse.

