



Identifying and Preventing Sepsis

Sepsis is a life-threatening infection in the blood stream that requires immediate medical intervention. It is one of the main contributing factors to unplanned medical hospitalizations for the I/DD adult population. Prevention and early identification of sepsis are vitally important and can prevent emergency hospitalization, other medical complications, and death.

What is Sepsis

Sepsis is a severe infection that has spread to the bloodstream. Sepsis occurs when an infection that the individual already has triggers the extreme immune response or reaction. Most cases are caused by an initial infection in the urinary tract (UTI), lungs (pneumonia), skin (wounds, sores, or burns), or gut (intestinal tract infection).

A person is “septic” when his or her immune response to the infection causes widespread inflammation. That reaction can lead to tissue damage, organ failure, and death.

Severe cases of sepsis can lead to septic shock, where an individual’s blood pressure drops to a dangerous level and multiple organs can fail.

Who is at risk?

Anyone can develop sepsis, but individuals at a higher risk include:

- Individuals with chronic medical conditions or a long-term illness;
- Individuals with a weakened immune system;
- Sepsis survivors;
- Adults 65 or older and children younger than one;
- Individuals living in a congregate setting where others have infections; and
- Individuals with invasive devices like breathing tubes or catheters.

Symptoms of Sepsis (CDC)

- High heart rate or low blood pressure;
- Fever, shivering, or feeling very cold;
- Feeling weak or faint;
- Confusion or disorientation;
- Shortness of breath or rapid breathing;
- Extreme pain or discomfort;
- Clammy/sweaty skin; or
- Rash.



Current Statistics

Department of Developmental Services

Roughly **1 in 5** of internal infection unplanned medical hospitalizations from Fiscal Year 2019/2020 involved sepsis

Nearly **½** of select unplanned medical hospitalizations at one regional center involved sepsis

United States Population

1.7 million adults in America develop sepsis every year

Almost **270,000 patients** die due to sepsis

1 in 3 patients who die while in a hospital had sepsis

7 in 10 patients with sepsis either require frequent medical care or have used medical services recently

Almost **80% of patients** develop sepsis outside of a hospital





Hygiene and Cleaning

- Practice good hand washing techniques.
- Clean and cover cuts until they are completely healed.
- Disinfect materials used by multiple persons between uses.

Preventing Infections

- Keep current with treatment for chronic conditions, like diabetes or kidney disease.
- Stay well-hydrated and to regularly use the bathroom, especially when you feel the urge to do so.
- Get vaccines recommended by your physician.
- Practice good personal hygiene.



Monitoring Infections

- Monitor progression of infections and illnesses.
- If you are a caregiver/provider, document changes in the individual's mental and physical health.
- Alert health care professionals about changes.



Act Fast

- Sepsis is a life-threatening medical emergency. Without quick treatment, it can lead to tissue damage, organ failure, and even death.
- Get medical attention immediately either in-person or through telehealth services.
- Ask specifically, "Could this infection be leading to sepsis?"

Sepsis Printable Poster



Download available:

[Four Ways to Get Ahead of Sepsis \(cdc.gov\)](https://www.cdc.gov/sepsis)

Additional Resources

CDPH – Sepsis Awareness:
[Sepsis Awareness \(ca.gov\)](https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/Sepsis-Awareness.aspx)

CDC – Think sepsis. Time matters:
[Making Health Care Safer | VitalSigns | CDC](https://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2017/s0914-thinksepsistime.html)

CDC – Staph Infections Can Kill:
[Staph infections can kill | VitalSigns | CDC](https://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2017/s0914-staphinfections.html)

CDC – MRSA in Early Childhood Care and Education Settings:
[MRSA Fact Sheet- For Early Childhood Care and Education Professionals \(cdc.gov\)](https://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2017/s0914-mrsa.html)

