

## Sepsis

### *What you need to know*

*This handout explains a condition called sepsis, how it is treated, and what loved ones can do to help the care team.*

### **What is sepsis?**

Sometimes, the body has an extreme response to an infection. The immune system sends chemicals into the bloodstream to fight the infection, but these chemicals cause *inflammation* (swelling, pain, and heat) in the body. This inflammation can harm the lungs, kidneys, and other organs.

This condition is called *sepsis*. It is also known as “blood poisoning.” If sepsis is not treated right away, it can cause death.

### **How is it treated?**

If we think a patient has sepsis, we begin treatment right away. We do not wait for test results, since sepsis can get worse very quickly.

To treat sepsis, we will:

- Give medicine to treat the infection
- Give *intravenous* (IV) fluids and other therapies to support the organs and body tissues
- Do tests to find the source of the infection



*Treatment includes giving fluids through an IV line in the patient's arm.*

### **How long does treatment take?**

The time needed for treatment and recovery depends on how severe the sepsis is. Full recovery may take days, weeks, or months.

Even after recovering from sepsis, some patients have health issues for the rest of their life. When they leave the hospital, they may need care in a rehabilitation or skilled nursing care facility.

### **What can loved ones do?**

- Always wash your hands before you enter the patient's room.

- Ask visitors who are sick to wait until they are well to visit.
- Make sure the patient and everyone who comes in contact with them:
  - Have the yearly flu vaccine
  - Are up to date with all their recommended vaccines
- Tell the care team right away if:
  - The patient seems more confused or will not wake up
  - Their pain is getting worse
  - Their wounds are not healing as they should
  - They seem to be breathing hard or are shivering
  - You feel that something is “not right” about the patient

### What can we expect after treatment?

Hospital patients who have had sepsis are more likely to be readmitted later with sepsis, infection, or other issues. This is why we want you to know the signs and symptoms of sepsis, so you can catch problems early. Here are the signs to watch for:

- Shivering, fever higher than 101.5°F (38.6°C), or very low temperature
- High heart rate
- New or worsening pain, or very bad pain
- New or increasing confusion, or feeling very sleepy
- Wounds that do not heal or are red, sore, or draining
- New or increasing shortness of breath
- Lower than normal urine output





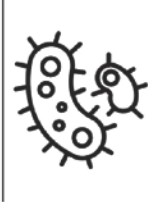

If you think you or your loved one might have sepsis, seek medical care right away. Explain your symptoms and tell the care provider that you are concerned about sepsis.

### Signs of Sepsis

**Questions?**

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or healthcare provider if you have questions or concerns.

To learn more about sepsis, visit the Surviving Sepsis Campaign website at [www.survivingsepsis.org](http://www.survivingsepsis.org).

					
<b>S</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>I</b>	<b>S</b>
Shivering or fever	Elevated heart rate	Pain	Sleepy or confused	Infection	Short of breath