

FOR PATIENTS AND FAMILIES

# GET AHEAD OF SEPSIS

## START THE CONVERSATION TODAY.

KNOW THE RISKS. SPOT THE SIGNS. ACT FAST.

Sepsis is the body's extreme response to an infection. It is life-threatening, and without timely treatment, sepsis can rapidly lead to tissue damage, organ failure, and death.

Below are questions and answers you can use to start a conversation with your doctor or nurse.

**“I want to keep my family safe. How can I protect them from sepsis?”**

- Talk to your doctor or nurse about steps you can take to prevent infections. Some steps include taking good care of chronic conditions and getting recommended vaccines.
- Practice good hygiene, such as handwashing, and keeping cuts clean and covered until healed.
- Know the symptoms of sepsis.
- **ACT FAST.** Get medical care **IMMEDIATELY** if you suspect sepsis or have an infection that's not getting better or is getting worse.

**“My elderly father has diabetes. Could he be at higher risk for infections that can lead to sepsis?”**


**Anyone can get an infection, and almost any infection can lead to sepsis.**

People with chronic conditions such as diabetes, lung disease, cancer, and kidney disease are at higher risk of developing infections that can lead to sepsis. Sepsis almost more commonly occurs in:

- Adults 65 or older
- People with weakened immune systems
- Children younger than one

**“I have an infection that doesn't seem to be getting any better. I am concerned this could be leading to sepsis. What can I do to make sure this does not happen?”**

Sepsis is a medical emergency. Act fast. Get medical care immediately if you suspect sepsis or have an infection that's not getting better or is getting worse.



If you or your loved one suspects sepsis or has an infection that's not getting better or is getting worse, ask your doctor or nurse, **“Could this infection be leading to sepsis?”**

**“My 6-month-old son had a low-grade fever and cough yesterday. But, today, he is not alert, is making fewer wet diapers, and is having difficulty breathing. Could this be leading to sepsis?”**

Talk to your doctor or nurse and ask if this could be leading to sepsis.

Symptoms of sepsis can include any one or a combination of the following:

- Confusion or disorientation
- Shortness of breath
- High heart rate
- Fever, or shivering, or feeling very cold
- Extreme pain or discomfort
- Clammy or sweaty skin

**“My grandmother has a urinary tract infection. She has had a fever for the past few days. She has also been confused and disoriented. Could her infection be leading to sepsis?”**

**Infections put you and your family at risk for sepsis.** Sepsis happens when an infection you already have—in your skin, lungs, urinary tract or somewhere else—triggers a chain reaction throughout your body.

To learn more about sepsis and how to prevent infections, visit [www.cdc.gov/sepsis](http://www.cdc.gov/sepsis).

