

What you need to know about sepsis

Recognition and prevention

You are receiving this booklet because you are at risk for developing sepsis or have recently been diagnosed with sepsis.



Notes

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Atención: si habla español, tiene a su disposición servicios lingüísticos gratuitos. Llame al 844-809-6648.

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What is sepsis?

Your body's immune system naturally prevents, identifies and fights against infection. With sepsis, the body can create a life-threatening immune system overreaction to an infection.

Sepsis is a medical emergency

If left untreated, sepsis can affect other parts of your body and even lead to death. **Any** infection can cause sepsis. Sepsis is not contagious; however, the infection that caused sepsis may be contagious. Sepsis frequently starts in the community and is the leading cause of death in hospitals and leading cause for readmission.

High risk factor checklist

- Age (over 65 or under one)
- Recent surgery or hospitalization
- Living in a nursing facility
- Multiple chronic conditions (e.g., kidney or heart failure, diabetes, sickle cell, COVID, COPD)
- Implantable devices (e.g., IVs, drains, catheters)
- Weakened immune system (e.g., HIV, AIDS, cancer, chronic steroid use)
- History of sepsis or current infection
- Open wounds, burns, or breaks in the skin
- Drug or alcohol abuse
- Pregnancy

Remember, sepsis can affect anyone, not just those who are high risk.

Infection signs & symptoms



Lungs

- Pneumonia, COVID-19, bronchitis
- Shortness of breath
- Cough
- Fast breathing



Urinary and Kidney

- Pyelonephritis (kidney infection)
- Increased urination
- Pain/burning with urination
- Bloody urine
- Not making any urine



Bowel

- Colitis (colon infection) or pancreatitis (pancreas infection)
- Severe abdominal pain
- Excessive diarrhea (3 or more times per day), bowel changes
- Nausea or vomiting



Skin

- Cellulitis, abscess, open wounds, surgical incisions
- Painful, hot, redness, swelling, new rash
- Foul-smelling drainage
- Flushed skin
- Cold, clammy skin



Whole body signs

- Body aches, fever, chills
- Extreme headaches, neck stiffness
- Fast heart rate
- Mental status changes
- Weakness



When to notify your doctor

It's **time** to seek immediate treatment if you experience a **combination** of the following:



T

Temperature changes

Above 101 °F or less than 96.8 °F



I

Infection

Signs and symptoms



M

Mental decline

Confusion, sleepiness, difficulty staying awake, dizziness, weakness



E

Extremely ill

Severe pain, discomfort, shortness of breath, low blood pressure

If you suspect sepsis, see a doctor urgently, call 911, or go to the emergency department and say “I am concerned for sepsis.”

What to expect

Diagnosis and treatment of sepsis

To help identify and treat sepsis, your provider may order:

- Lab tests
- Cultures
- Images
- Medications and/or antibiotics

Sepsis must be treated quickly.

Follow-up care

- Ensure a follow-up primary care appointment is made within seven days from being discharged
- Understand why you are taking the medications and any dosing changes
- Take all your medication as ordered, even if you are feeling better
- Get your prescriptions filled ASAP

Know:

- Your activity restrictions
- Diet or fluid recommendations
- Resources available

Call your provider if you begin experiencing new or unresolved symptoms of a sepsis infection.

Post-sepsis syndrome (PSS)

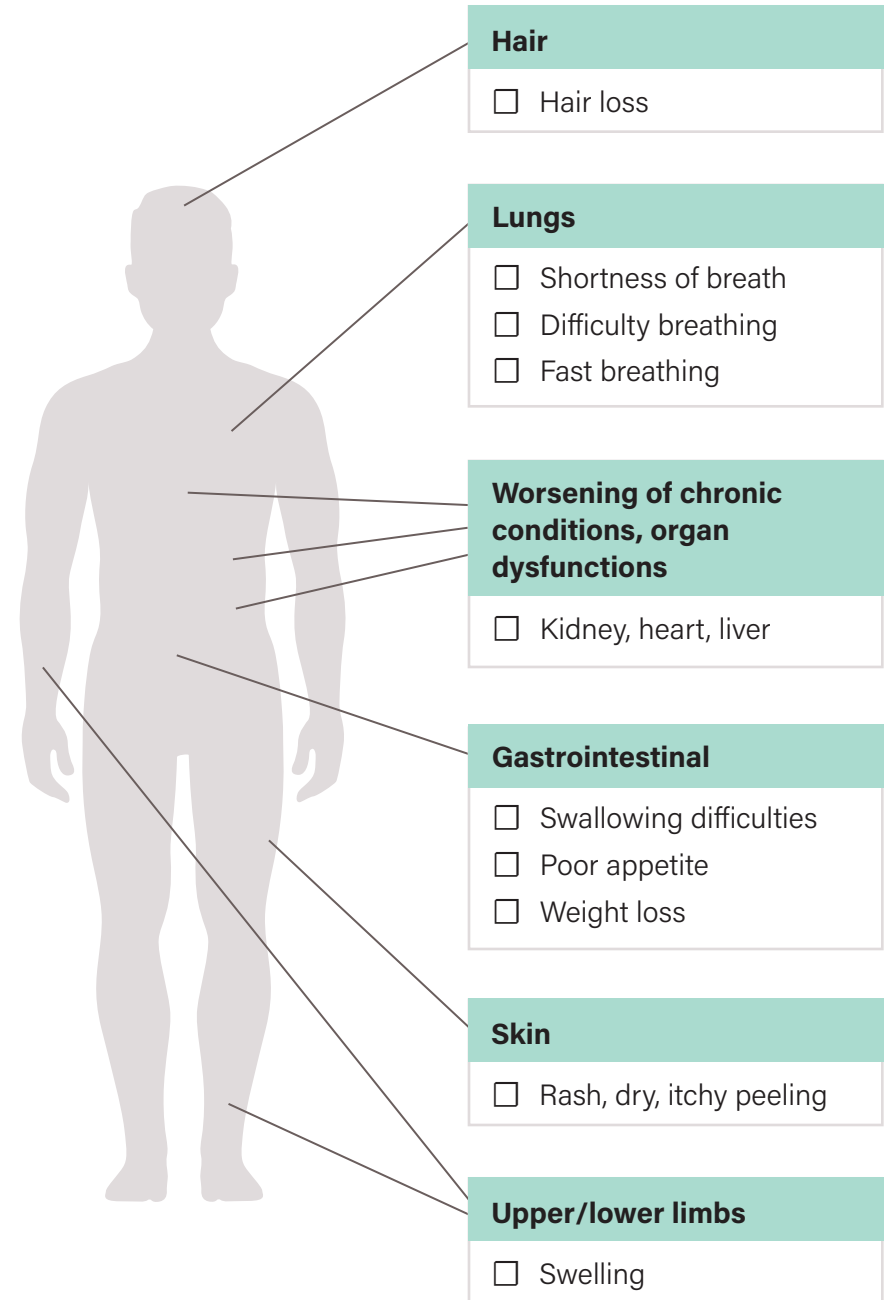
PSS is a group of symptoms that affect people after being seriously ill with sepsis and can cause long-term impacts on your ability to function. However, these symptoms can get better over time. Let your provider know if you are experiencing these PSS concerns or if you have any questions.

Psychological/emotional

- Hallucination
- Panic attacks
- Flash backs
- Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)
- Sleeping difficulties, nightmares
- Decreased mental functioning:
 - Forgetfulness
 - Memory loss
 - Difficulty concentrating
- Loss of self-esteem
- Depression
- Mood swings

Physical

- Increased tiredness/exhaustion
- Disabling muscle or joint pain
- Repeat infections



Prevention

Your involvement is important in preventing infections that can lead to sepsis.

Avoid:

- Touching wounds or open cuts
- Being around others who are sick
- Sharing towels, cups, silverware or other items with anyone who is sick
- Drinking alcohol
- Smoking

Practice healthy habits:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 15 seconds
- Tell others to wash their hands before touching you
- Keep your environment clean
- Eat healthy and stay hydrated
- Stay current on vaccinations, including your annual flu shot
- Keep all doctors appointments
- Wear a mask in crowded areas

Healthy habits are the key to prevention.

Sepsis questionnaire

My sepsis risk factors are: _____

The type of infection that caused my sepsis was: _____

The treatment for my sepsis was: _____

Ways I can help prevent sepsis and the spread of infection are:

Questions/concerns I have are: _____

Please check the box when you understand:

- I know the signs and symptoms of sepsis
- I understand when I should follow-up urgently
- I know my risk factors for sepsis
- I reviewed what I need to do after discharge
- I reviewed my medications and know: why/when/how to take them
- I have a plan to get my medications
- I learned about post-sepsis syndrome
- I am aware of additional sepsis resources available to me

This information is provided by Sentara Healthcare and is not intended to replace the medical advice of your doctor or healthcare provider. The information provided herein should not be used during any medical emergency or for the diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. A licensed physician should be consulted for diagnosis and treatment of any and all medical conditions.

Call **911** for all medical emergencies.

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