

DDD PREVENTION BULLETIN | SEPSIS/INFECTION



Sepsis is the body's extreme and life-threatening response to an infection. Sepsis happens when an infection you already have triggers a chain reaction throughout your body. Infections that lead to sepsis most often start in the lung, urinary tract, skin, or gastrointestinal tract. Without timely treatment, sepsis can rapidly lead to tissue damage, organ failure, and death.

Bacterial infections are the most common causes of sepsis. Fast recognition and treatment can increase the chances of survival

Sepsis/Infection Risk Factors:

- Organ transplant recipients
- Recent history of invasive surgical procedures
- Severe illness or hospitalizations
- Poor or dependency on others for hygiene
- Dependency with feedings
- Anatomic abnormalities
- Immobility causing pressure ulcers
- Indwelling urinary catheters, G-tubes, shunts, tracheostomies, and other indwelling devices



People with developmental disabilities are at high risk for Sepsis due to some of these diagnoses:

- Aspiration
- Dysphagia
- GERD
- Weakened immune systems due to autoimmune disorders or malnutrition
- Chronic medical conditions (diabetes, hepatitis, cancer, kidney disease)
- Constipation
- Prior sepsis history
- Epilepsy
- Cerebral Palsy
- Down syndrome

Signs and Symptoms:

- Signs of an infection
- High heart rate, low blood pressure
- Fever, feeling cold or shivering
- Confusion or disorientation
- Shortness of breath
- Extreme pain or discomfort
- Clammy or sweaty skin



Complications:

- **THE MOST SEVERE COMPLICATION** is Septic Shock! The body goes into shock from the decrease of blood pressure, in turn, causing decreased blood flow to tissues/organs possibly resulting in death.



Treatment:

- I V fluids
- Antibiotics, if the cause is bacterial
- Oxygen
- Additional treatments may be needed depending on the severity

Prevention:

- Prevent infections by taking care of chronic conditions and getting recommended vaccines
- Treating infections quickly, do not delay treatment!
- Have good hygiene by washing hands, keeping any cuts clean and covered, and overall good personal hygiene
- Routine catheter changes
- Evaluation of possible aspiration by swallow study
- Follow prescribed wound care regimen and repositioning guidelines



Facts about Sepsis:

- At least 1.7 million adults in America develop sepsis annually.
- Nearly 270,000 Americans die because of sepsis every year.
- 1 in 3 people who dies in a hospital had sepsis during that hospitalization.
- Sepsis, or the infection causing sepsis, starts outside of the hospital in nearly 87% of cases.