

# GET AHEAD OF SEPSIS

**KNOW THE RISKS. SPOT THE SIGNS. ACT FAST.**

## **CDC helps patients and their families *Get Ahead of Sepsis***

Each year, about 1.7 million adults in America develop sepsis. At least 350,000 adults who develop sepsis die during their hospitalization or are discharged to hospice. CDC's [Get Ahead of Sepsis](#) educational effort encourages patients and caregivers to prevent infections that lead to sepsis and seek immediate medical care if they suspect sepsis.

Sepsis is the body's extreme response to an infection. It is a life-threatening medical emergency. 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.

Anyone can get an infection, and almost any infection, including COVID-19, can lead to sepsis. Some people are at higher risk for sepsis:

- Adults 65 or older
- People with weakened immune systems
- People with chronic conditions, such as diabetes, lung disease, cancer, and kidney disease
- People with recent severe illness or hospitalization, including due to severe COVID-19
- People who survived sepsis
- Children younger than one

CDC's *Get Ahead of Sepsis* encourages patients and families to take specific steps to reduce their risk of sepsis:

1. Talk to your healthcare professional about steps you can take to prevent infections that can lead to sepsis, including:
  - Take good care of chronic conditions
  - Get recommended vaccines, since vaccinations prevent some infections, but do not cure sepsis
2. Practice good hygiene:
  - Wash your hands
  - Keep cuts and wounds clean and covered until healed
3. Know the signs and symptoms of sepsis. A person with sepsis might have one or more of the following signs or symptoms:
  - High heart rate or weak pulse
  - Shortness of breath
  - Fever, shivering, or feeling very cold
  - Extreme pain or discomfort
  - Confusion or disorientation
  - Clammy or sweaty skin

A medical assessment by a healthcare professional is needed to confirm sepsis.

4. Sepsis is a medical emergency. If you or your loved one has an infection that's not getting better or is getting worse, **ACT FAST**. Get medical care **IMMEDIATELY**. Ask your healthcare professional, "Could this infection be leading to sepsis?" and if you should go to the emergency room.

To support patients, caregivers, and healthcare professionals, CDC provides educational materials and resources, including fact sheets, brochures, infographics, an educational video called "Four Ways to Get Ahead of Sepsis," and a public service announcement at: [www.cdc.gov/sepsis](http://www.cdc.gov/sepsis).

