



Information for Patients & Caregivers

What to do if you or someone you know
has Sepsis?

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+ SEPSIS IS A MEDICAL EMERGENCY

+ WHAT IS SEPSIS?

Sepsis is a life-threatening condition caused by the body's overwhelming and toxic response to an infection.

Chemicals released by the body, which are aimed at fighting an infection, may get out of balance. This can lead to body tissue and organ damage.

SEPSIS REQUIRES PROMPT AND SKILLED MEDICAL CARE.

Different types of infection can lead to sepsis and it is not always possible to identify the specific source of sepsis.

The most common infections leading to sepsis are the ones affecting:

- Lungs (e.g., pneumonia).
- Urinary tract (e.g., cystitis).
- Intestines (e.g., appendicitis).
- Central nervous system (e.g., meningitis and encephalitis).

Post-operative infections are also frequently associated with sepsis.

Untreated, it can quickly lead to multiple organ dysfunction and even death

ANYONE WITH AN INFECTION CAN DEVELOP SEPSIS. But some people are at increased risk of sepsis.

+ RISK FACTORS

Sepsis is more likely in people who:

- Are aged over 65 or below 1 year.
- Have a weakened immune system:
 - Cancer patients after chemotherapy and radiation therapy.
 - Patients with diabetes or an autoimmune disease.
 - Patients on drugs suppressing immune system (e.g., corticosteroids).
- Have had surgery in the past 6 weeks.
- Have recently had an injury that broke the skin.
- Are pregnant or who have recently been pregnant.
- Have a catheter for draining urine.



Children can get sepsis at any age. In newborn babies, doctors call it *neonatal sepsis* and classify into two types:

- **Early onset sepsis (EOS)** (within the first 3 days of birth).
- **Late onset sepsis (LOS)** (after day 3 of life).

Laboratory tests and treatment options may differ for babies with EOS and LOS.

SOMETIMES SEPSIS CAN BE DIFFICULT TO SPOT:

Symptoms, such as fever and feeling unwell in general, are common for many other illnesses. Some patients may have an unusual presentation and no fever.

+ SPECIALIST MANAGEMENT

If sepsis is recognised or suspected, your doctor will initiate a plan called *The Sepsis Six Bundle Approach*, as soon as possible (usually within 60 minutes).

The Sepsis Six Bundle Approach includes several therapeutic and diagnostic steps:

- Administration of oxygen.
- Blood tests.
- Blood cultures to determine the possible cause of infection.
- Administration of antibiotics.
- Administration of fluids intravenously.
- Tests of urine.

You doctor may want to do some additional tests, such as an electrocardiogram (ECG) and a chest X-ray.



SYMPTOMS OF SEPSIS ARE NOT ALWAYS OBVIOUS IN CHILDREN:

Some children with sepsis might just seem to be over-tired.

+ SEPTIC SHOCK

Septic shock is the most severe level and a serious complication of sepsis.

It drops the blood pressure to dangerous levels leading to insufficient blood supply of major organs. In these conditions, organs stop working properly.

Septic shock is associated with a greater risk of death than sepsis alone.

Sepsis is not diagnosed based on an infection itself.

These tests will help your doctor to identify the source of infection and select the appropriate treatment option. They will also show if you (or your child) is in danger of any organ damage.

+ TREATMENT OPTIONS

The goal of sepsis treatment is to support the patient's body and organs while allowing the immune system to fight the infection and inflammation.

Sepsis and septic shock are usually treated with antibiotics.

Your doctor will decide which form of antibiotics is suitable for your case: tablets, liquid antibiotics for swallowing or liquid antibiotics for intravenous infusion.

TAKING ANTIBIOTICS WITHOUT VISITING A DOCTOR CAN BE DANGEROUS.

Life support measures are typically provided in the intensive care unit to support the patient until the body can resume normal functioning. These measures include medications to raise low blood pressure, oxygen, hydration with fluids through an intravenous drip, and antifungal medicine

Speak to your doctor if you or your child are allergic to any medication

If you think that any of your loved ones have sepsis, arrange hospitalisation *immediately!*

In urgent situations, your doctor might arrange a hospitalisation to the nearest clinic with emergency medical help.

Duration of treatment depends on the type of bacteria, severity of infection, health condition before occurrence of sepsis, age and response of the body to the medication.



+ PROGNOSIS

Some people are successfully treated for sepsis and recover fully. But even with the best care, sepsis can be deadly. **There are no reliable methods to predict who will survive sepsis.**

People recovering from sepsis often need long stays in the ICU and hospital. Being very sick and in bed can then result in muscle weakness, requiring physical therapy and rehabilitation.

Many people who suffer from severe sepsis, or septic shock, may not be able to return to work or school in the same role as before they were sick.

In general, sepsis survivors have a reduced life expectancy and obesity is associated with an increased risk of complications.

+ ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Additional information on diagnosis and management of Sepsis in children and adults can be found in the National Clinical Guideline published by The Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) Qatar.

The guideline is available to the public from the MoPH website: www.moph.qov.qa

+ SYMPTOMS OF SEPSIS

Symptoms and signs that are usually present in patients of all age groups:

- Fever or low body temperature.
- Fast heartbeat.
- Fast or difficulty in breathing.
- Less urine than usually.
- Pale or patchy looking skin.
- Signs of potential infection:
 - Increased redness.
 - Swelling or discharge at a surgical site.
 - Breakdown of a wound.
- Change in mental state:
 - Being confused.
 - Struggling to make sense.

COMMON SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS ARE OFTEN ACCOMPANIED BY ADDITIONAL FEATURES SPECIFIC TO THE AGE OF THE PATIENT.

Additional signs and symptoms associated with sepsis in infants include:

- Stop breastfeeding or difficulty in sucking.
- Green, bloody or black vomit.
- Weak, "whining" or continuous crying.
- Irritable or reduced physical activity.
- Pain or discomfort or aching all over the body.

Additional signs and symptoms associated with sepsis in young children include:

- Poor appetite.
- Neck stiffness.

Additional signs and symptoms associated with sepsis in adolescents and adults include:

- Severely altered mental state.
- Pale and tired appearance.
- Need for oxygen.
- Bluish colour of skin, lips or tongue.
- Non-blanching rash of skin.