

SEPSIS KILLS

Why is sepsis so dangerous?

- More than 1.6 million people are hospitalized in the U.S. each year — one every 20 seconds.
- Sepsis contributes to about 40% (258,000 deaths) of U.S. hospital deaths each year (approximately 550 people every day) — far more than the number of U.S. deaths from prostate cancer, breast cancer and AIDS combined.
- Many patients already have sepsis upon admission to a hospital.
- Mortality increases 8% every hour treatment is delayed.
- Sepsis is the leading pediatric killer worldwide.
- Sepsis affects more than 26 million people worldwide each year.

WHAT IS SEPSIS?

Sepsis is the body's toxic response to infection – caused by an overwhelming response by the body's normal immune system to infection. Chemicals released into the blood to fight infection trigger widespread inflammation and can attack the body's organs.

Sepsis should be considered a medical emergency. Sepsis kills. It can progress very quickly from sepsis to severe sepsis or septic shock, but if caught early the prognosis is good.

How can someone become septic?

Sepsis can be caused by many common infections including those from a simple cut, scrape, burn, bruise or bug bite.

Other sources include water infections, urinary tract infections and burst ulcers, and many common infections such as pneumonia.

Informational brochure provided by the
NYSUT Health Care Professionals Council

nysut
A Union of Professionals

Representing more than
600,000 professionals
in education,
human services
and health care

800 Troy-Schenectady Road,
Latham, NY 12110-2455

518-213-6000 • 800-342-9810

www.nysut.org

New York State United Teachers
Affiliated with AFT • NEA • AFL-CIO

SEPSIS KILLS

LOOK FOR SIGNS AND ACT QUICKLY

Awareness

Sepsis kills far more people than prostate cancer, breast cancer and AIDS combined, yet only 44% of U.S. adults have heard of sepsis.

Despite various campaigns and the availability of good evidence for treatment, the death rate associated with sepsis remains high, mainly due to poor identification and delayed interventions.

The very old, the very young and those with compromised immune systems can be at higher risk.

What are the symptoms of sepsis?

To be diagnosed with sepsis, you must exhibit at least two of the following symptoms:

- Fever, chills
- Rapid or difficult breathing
- Elevated heart rate
- New confusion, disorientation or drowsiness
- Severe muscle and joint pains
- Skin Rash
- Poor feeding (infants and children)

Many of these symptoms, such as fever and difficulty breathing, are the same as in other conditions, making sepsis hard to diagnose in its early stages.

Severe sepsis

The following signs and symptoms, indicate an organ may be failing:

- Abrupt change in mental status
- Significantly decreased urine output
- Decrease in platelet count
- Difficulty breathing
- Abnormal heart pumping function
- Abdominal pain

Septic shock

Severe sepsis, plus extremely low blood pressure that does not adequately respond to simple fluid replacement, indicates that the patient may be in septic shock.

For severe sepsis or septic shock, lifesaving measures may be needed to stabilize breathing and heart function.

Sepsis should be treated as a medical emergency — as quickly and efficiently as possible with rapid administration of antibiotics and fluids. People with sepsis are usually treated in hospital intensive care units.

Doctors try to treat the infection, sustain the vital organs and prevent a drop in blood pressure by prescribing medications and treatments including intravenous (IV) fluids to maintain normal blood oxygen levels and blood pressure. Antibiotics alone will not treat sepsis. Ensuring the body has enough fluids helps organs function and may reduce damage from sepsis.

What can be done in schools?

Early recognition and early treatment is the key to saving lives. Ensuring that a school nurse is on staff in every school to educate parents and students to signs and symptoms of infection when a child is exposed to injury and potentially life-threatening bacteria is crucial.

School nurses play a vital role in spotting sepsis. They are critical to identifying patients who are unwell or deteriorating, and in initiating life-saving treatments.

Can hospitals reduce the numbers of severe sepsis they treat?

Yes. It is crucial for medical staff to identify patients with sepsis on the floors and in the Emergency Department before they progress to the severe stage.

Economic Cost

Sepsis is the most expensive condition treated in U.S. hospitals, costing more than \$20 billion in 2011, increasing on average by 11.9% annually.

The progression of sepsis

