



Sepsis Treatment: A Glossary of Terms

Sepsis occurs when an infection or injury causes your body to stop protecting you and starts to attack you instead.

Treatment options vary based on symptoms and condition.

Sepsis is a serious condition that can lead to organ failure and death. Sepsis must be treated as a medical emergency.

Not all treatments and medications may be appropriate for every person. The healthcare team decides on the appropriate course of treatment based on each individual's symptoms and condition. Talk to your medical team to learn more about sepsis and to understand which treatment options are suitable for your loved one.

Watching someone undergoing treatment for sepsis may seem scary and confusing, particularly because you may not understand all the terms used. This fact sheet includes explanations of some of the more common terms you may come across.

Arterial line

Similar to an intravenous (IV) but it goes directly into an artery, rather than a vein. It is used for continuously monitoring blood pressure and obtaining blood specimens without additional needle sticks.

Broad spectrum antibiotic

Drug effective in treating a variety of infections.

Catheter

Thin plastic tube used to transfer fluid into or out of the body, e.g., a urinary catheter drains urine from the bladder. . An IV catheter brings fluid directly into a vein.

CRRT

Continuous Renal Replacement Therapy. Treatment that cleans toxins from blood when kidneys fail, also called dialysis. Dialysis can also be intermittent, performed daily or every other day.

Cultures

Tests to identify infections.

Intravenous fluids (IV)

Liquid solution given in the vein. IV fluids may also include medications.

Labs

Medical tests that help the healthcare professionals decide what types of treatments are needed.

PICC line

Special IV that is inserted for extended periods of time.

Protein C

A substance in your blood that prevents it from clotting.

Vasopressors

Drugs used to raise blood pressure.

Ventilator

Machine that helps an individual breathe. The ventilator assists a patient in moving air in and out of their lungs and can provide higher levels of oxygen than face masks or nasal prongs.

Talk to your medical team to understand your treatment options.

For more information on sepsis, visit SepsisAlliance.org