



SEPSIS ALLIANCE

*Suspect Sepsis. Save Lives.*

# Sepsis: Understanding the Risk

***Each year, sepsis affects up to 3 million people in the United States.<sup>1</sup>***

***Sepsis is a serious condition that can lead to organ failure and death. Sepsis kills more people in the U.S. than breast, lung, and prostate cancer combined, and kills more children in the US than pediatric cancers.<sup>2,3</sup>***

***More than half of sepsis survivors are left with post-sepsis syndrome (PSS), which can result in mild to severe and/or mental disability.<sup>4</sup>***

***Sepsis must always be treated as a medical emergency.***

<sup>1</sup>Crit Care Med. 2013 May;41(5):1167-74

<sup>2</sup>HCUP, 2006

<sup>3</sup>Leading Causes of Death, CDC, 2014

<sup>4</sup>JAMA. 2010;304(16):1787-1794

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Sepsis can affect anyone regardless of age, sex, ethnicity, or previous state of health. Any type of infection can trigger sepsis. Sepsis can develop very rapidly. A relatively healthy person can get very sick, very quickly, sometimes before they even realize they have an infection.

Doctors don't know yet what causes sepsis to occur in some people and not in others, but it is known that some people are at higher risk of developing sepsis. These include:

- People over the age of 65 years
- Young children, especially under the age of 1 year
- People with weakened immune systems, which may be caused by immune suppressing medications (such as corticosteroids and chemotherapy), and those who do not have a spleen
- People with chronic illnesses, such as diabetes or COPD

## Reducing your risk of developing sepsis

Sepsis cannot always be avoided, but by reducing your risk of infection and treating infections seriously, you reduce your risk of developing sepsis. Actions include:

- Regular and thorough hand washing
- Staying up-to-date with regular vaccinations
- Cleaning and protecting all open wounds
- Taking antibiotics as prescribed
- Not insisting on antibiotics if your infection is not bacterial
- Not taking someone else's antibiotics to self-treat an infection

Talk to your healthcare provider to understand treatment options.

For more information on sepsis, visit [Sepsis.org](http://Sepsis.org)