



Sepsis and Aging Fact Sheet

Definition: Sepsis is the body's overwhelming and life-threatening response to infection which can lead to tissue damage, organ failure, and death.

Who it Hurts: While sepsis is an equal-opportunity killer, impacting the sick, the well, and people of all ages, some groups are more likely to be affected. These include very young children, older adults, and those with a weakened immune system.

Prevention: The risk of sepsis can be reduced by preventing or quickly identifying and managing infections. This includes practicing good hygiene and staying current with vaccinations, and seeking treatment when infections are suspected.

Treatment: Sepsis is a medical emergency that requires urgent attention and rapid treatment for survival. Sepsis can be treated, and in many instances, lives are saved by using existing and proven protocols.

Recovery: Many people fully recover from sepsis while others may have long-lasting effects, such as amputations or organ dysfunction, like kidney failure. Other after-effects of sepsis are less obvious, such as memory loss, anxiety, or depression.

Symptoms: When it comes to sepsis, remember **It's About TIME™**.

T – Temperature - higher or lower than normal

I - Infection – may have signs or symptoms of infection

M – Mental Decline - confused, sleepy, difficult to rouse

E – Extremely Ill – “I feel like I might die,” severe pain or discomfort

If you **suspect sepsis** (observe a combination of these symptoms), see your medical professional immediately, CALL 911, or go to a hospital with an advocate and say, **“I AM CONCERNED ABOUT SEPSIS.”**

Critical Facts for Seniors:

- More than 80% of sepsis patients are 50 years of age or older.¹
- More than 1.3 million adults 45+ are hospitalized with sepsis each year.²
- Adults age 65+ are 13 times more likely to be hospitalized with sepsis than adults younger than 65.³
- 63% of older adults 60+ admitted to the ICU present with sepsis upon admission.⁴
- In older adults, sepsis is 1.96 times more likely to result in readmission to a hospital than nonsepsis hospitalizations.⁵
- More than 40% of older patients have another hospitalization within three months of the initial sepsis, most commonly due to a repeat episode of sepsis or another infection.^{6,7}
- Among older survivors of sepsis, 76% were more likely to require additional care after hospital discharge.⁸
- 34% of patients hospitalized with sepsis are discharged to a skilled outpatient facility.¹⁹
- Compared to patients with other diagnoses, patients hospitalized with sepsis are one-half as likely to be discharged home and 3 times as likely to be discharge to a skilled outpatient facility.²⁰

- Nursing home residents are over 6 times more likely to present with sepsis in the emergency room than non-nursing home residents.⁹
- A majority (59%) of sepsis survivors age 50+ experience impaired cognitive or physical function, or both.^{10,11}
- Older sepsis patients experience on average 1 to 2 new limitations on activities of daily living (e.g. bathing, dressing, managing money) after hospitalization.⁶
- Older severe sepsis survivors are at higher risk for long-term cognitive impairment and physical problems than others their age who were treated for other illnesses.^{10,11}
- There are 20,000 new cases of moderate-to-severe cognitive impairment each year among the elderly, specifically caused by sepsis.⁶
- Sepsis is the leading cause of death in U.S. hospitals for people of all ages.¹²
- The vast majority of sepsis cases (as many as 92%) originate in the community, prior to hospitalization.¹²
- Mortality from sepsis increases by as much as 8% every hour that treatment is delayed. As many as 80% of sepsis deaths could be prevented with rapid diagnosis and treatment.¹³

Economic Cost and Awareness:

- Sepsis is the #1 cost of hospitalization in the U.S., with costs for inpatient and skilled nursing care estimated at \$62 billion each year.^{14,15}
- Sepsis readmissions have an average cost of over \$10,000, greater than for pneumonia, heart failure, COPD, or heart attacks.¹⁶
- The average cost per initial hospital stay for sepsis is \$18,600, double the average cost per stay across all other conditions.¹⁷
- More than one-quarter of U.S. adults have NEVER heard of sepsis and just 15% can name the common symptoms.²¹

To find out more please visit [Sepsis.org](https://www.sepsis.org)

1. <https://news.aetna.com/2017/02/over-80-percent-of-sepsis-patients-were-older-adults/?cid=soc--&linkId=36350948>
2. <https://www.hcup-us.ahrq.gov/reports/statbriefs/sb122.pdf>
3. <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/products/databriefs/db62.htm>
4. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4766385/>
5. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4590016/>
6. <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jama/article-abstract/2667727?redirect=true>
7. [http://www.criticalcare.theclinics.com/article/S0749-0704\(17\)30078-7/abstract](http://www.criticalcare.theclinics.com/article/S0749-0704(17)30078-7/abstract)
8. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/25741958>
9. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3495564/>
10. <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jama/fullarticle/186769>
11. <http://www.uofmhealth.org/news/1782sepsis-survivors-more-than-three-times-as>
12. <http://jamanetwork.com/journals/jama/fullarticle/1873131>
13. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/16625125>
14. <https://www.hcup-us.ahrq.gov/reports/statbriefs/sb204-Most-Expensive-Hospital-Conditions.pdf>
15. https://journals.lww.com/ccmjournal/FullText/2020/03000/Sepsis_Among_Medicare_Beneficiaries__3__The.4.aspx
16. <http://jamanetwork.com/journals/jama/fullarticle/2598785>
17. <https://www.hcup-us.ahrq.gov/reports/statbriefs/sb168-Hospital-Costs-United-States-2011.jsp>
18. <https://www.sepsis.org/sepsis-alliance-news/sepsis-word-know-meaning-learn/>
19. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/28199891>
20. <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/databriefs/db62.htm>
21. <https://www.sepsis.org/2020-sepsis-awareness-survey/>