



## Sepsis 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, those with a weakened immune system, racial and ethnic minorities, and lower income individuals and families.

**Prevention:** The risk of sepsis can be reduced by preventing or quickly identifying and managing infections. This includes practicing good hygiene, 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 individuals fully recover from sepsis, while others may have long-lasting effects, such as amputations or organ dysfunction, like kidney failure. Other aftereffects 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** – severe pain, discomfort, shortness of breath

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:

- Sepsis is the leading cause of death in U.S. hospitals.<sup>1</sup>
- Approximately 6% of all hospitalizations are due to sepsis and 35% of all deaths in-hospital are due to sepsis.<sup>2</sup>
- Sepsis can be caused by any infection, whether fungal, viral, parasitic, or bacterial, and not all of these pathogens can be cultured. In up to half of septic patients, no pathogen is identified.<sup>3</sup>
- Sepsis is the leading cause of readmissions to the hospital, with as many as 19% of people originally hospitalized with sepsis re-hospitalized within 30 days and about 40% rehospitalized within 90 days.<sup>4, 5, 6</sup>
- As many as 87% of sepsis cases originate in the community and not in the hospital.<sup>2</sup>
- The risk of mortality from sepsis increases by 4-9% for every hour treatment is delayed.<sup>7, 8, 9</sup> As many as 80% of septic shock patients can be saved with rapid diagnosis and treatment.<sup>7</sup>
- Viral sepsis is the most common complication in severe COVID-19, and is more commonly seen in hospitalized COVID-19 patients than hospitalized influenza patients.<sup>10, 11, 12, 13, 14</sup> Studies indicate that 78% of COVID-19 patients hospitalized in the intensive care unit have sepsis.<sup>15</sup>

### Human Cost:

- Sepsis affects an estimated 49 million people worldwide each year, including more than 20 million children under age 5, and nearly 5 million older children and adolescents (ages 5-19).<sup>16</sup>
- Sepsis takes 11 million lives around the world each year, contributing to 20% of all deaths globally and taking more lives than cancer.<sup>16, 17</sup> This is more than 20 deaths every minute.<sup>18</sup>
- More than 1.7 million people in the U.S. are diagnosed with sepsis each year – one every 20 seconds – and the incidence is rising.<sup>2, 19, 20</sup>
- An estimated 350,000 adults die from sepsis every year in the U.S. – one every 90 seconds. This includes 270,000 adults who die in-hospital and an estimated 80,000 released to hospice.<sup>2</sup> This estimate places sepsis as the third leading cause of death in the United States.<sup>2, 21</sup>
- Each year, more than 75,000 children in the U.S. develop severe sepsis and 6,800 of these children die, more than from pediatric cancers.<sup>22, 23</sup>
- Sepsis causes at least 261,000 maternal deaths every year worldwide and is driving increases in pregnancy-related deaths in the U.S.<sup>24, 25</sup>
- Sepsis in the U.S. disproportionately affects the Black community; Blacks bear nearly twice the burden of sepsis deaths, relative to the Black population, as whites.<sup>26, 27, 28</sup>
- Approximately 1% of sepsis survivors undergo one or more surgical amputations of a limb or digit as a result of sepsis.<sup>29, 30</sup> In 2012, there were more than 13,700 sepsis-related amputations in the U.S. This works out to an average of 38 amputations per day.<sup>31</sup>
- Sepsis survivors have a shortened life expectancy, are more likely to suffer from an impaired quality of life, and often experience worsened cognitive (mental) and physical function.<sup>6, 20, 32, 33, 34</sup>
- Missed infections are the third most common cause of diagnostic errors identified in medical malpractice cases. Sepsis is the most common condition among missed infections in diagnostic errors.<sup>35</sup>

### Economic Cost:

- Sepsis is the #1 cost of hospitalization in the U.S.<sup>36</sup> Costs for acute sepsis hospitalization and skilled nursing are estimated to be \$62 billion annually.<sup>37</sup> This is only a portion of all sepsis-related costs, since there are substantial additional costs after discharge for many.
- The average cost per hospital stay for sepsis is double the average cost per stay across all other conditions.<sup>38</sup>
- Sepsis is the #1 cause of readmission to the hospital, costing more than \$3.5 billion each year.<sup>5, 38</sup>

### Awareness:

- An estimated 31% of U.S. adults have NEVER heard of sepsis.<sup>39</sup>

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

### Suggested Citation:

Sepsis Alliance. *Sepsis Fact Sheet*. 2024. <https://www.sepsis.org/education/resources/fact-sheets/>

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