

# GET AHEAD OF SEPSIS

KNOW THE RISKS.  
SPOT THE SIGNS.  
ACT FAST.

## CDC helps patients and their families *Get Ahead of Sepsis*

Each year, about 1.7 million adults in America develop sepsis. At least 350,000 adults who develop sepsis die during their hospitalization or are discharged to hospice. CDC's [Get Ahead of Sepsis](#) educational effort encourages patients and caregivers to prevent infections that lead to sepsis and seek immediate medical care if they suspect sepsis.

Sepsis is the body's extreme response to an infection. It is a life-threatening medical emergency. Sepsis happens when an infection you already have triggers a chain reaction throughout your body. Infections that lead to sepsis most often start in the lung, urinary tract, skin, or gastrointestinal tract. Without timely treatment, sepsis can rapidly lead to tissue damage, organ failure, and death.

Anyone can develop sepsis, but some people are at higher risk for sepsis:

- Adults 65 or older
- Children younger than one
- People who survived sepsis
- People with chronic conditions, such as diabetes, lung disease, cancer, and kidney disease
- People with recent severe illness, surgery, or hospitalization
- People with weakened immune systems
- Women who are pregnant or postpartum

CDC's *Get Ahead of Sepsis* encourages patients and families to take specific steps to reduce their risk of sepsis:

1. Talk to a healthcare professional about steps you can take to prevent infections that can lead to sepsis, including:
  - Take good care of chronic conditions, such as diabetes, lung disease, cancer, and kidney disease
  - Get recommended vaccines, since vaccinations can prevent or reduce the severity of some infections that can lead to sepsis
2. Practice good hygiene:
  - Keep hands clean
  - Keep cuts and wounds clean and covered until healed
3. Know the signs and symptoms of sepsis. A person with sepsis might have one or more of the following signs or symptoms:

▪ Clammy or sweaty skin	▪ Fever, shivering, or feeling very cold
▪ Confusion or disorientation	▪ High heart rate or weak pulse
▪ Extreme pain or discomfort	▪ Shortness of breath
4. Sepsis is a medical emergency. If you or your loved one has an infection that's not getting better or is getting worse, act fast. Get medical care immediately. Ask a healthcare professional, "Could this infection be leading to sepsis?" and if you should go to the emergency room. Healthcare professionals should immediately evaluate and treat people who might have sepsis.

To support patients, caregivers, and healthcare professionals, CDC provides educational materials and resources, including fact sheets, brochures, and infographics at [www.cdc.gov/sepsis/](http://www.cdc.gov/sepsis/).

