

## How can I get ahead of sepsis?

- **Know sepsis signs and symptoms** to identify and treat patients early.
- **Act fast** if you suspect sepsis.
- **Prevent infections** by following infection control practices (e.g., hand hygiene, appropriate catheter management) and ensuring patients receive recommended vaccines.
- **Educate your patients and their families about:**
  - Preventing infections.
  - Keeping cuts and wounds clean and covered until healed.
  - Managing chronic conditions.
  - Recognizing early signs and symptoms of worsening infection and sepsis.
  - Seeking immediate care if signs and symptoms are present.

## What should I do if I suspect sepsis?

- **Know your facility's guidance for diagnosing and managing sepsis.**
- **Immediately alert the healthcare professional overseeing care of the patient if it is not you.**
- **Start antibiotics as soon as possible in addition to other therapies appropriate for the patient.** If a specific bacterial cause of sepsis is known, therapy should be targeted to optimize treatment, and broad-spectrum antibiotics might not be needed.
- **Check patient progress frequently.** Treatment requires urgent medical care, usually in an intensive care unit in a hospital, and includes careful monitoring of vital signs and often antibiotics. Early and frequent reassessment of patients with sepsis should be undertaken to determine the appropriate duration and type of therapy.

**Sepsis is a medical emergency. You play a critical role. Protect your patients by acting fast. With your fast recognition and treatment, most patients survive.**

**GET AHEAD  
OF SEPSIS**

Learn more at  
[cdc.gov/sepsis](https://cdc.gov/sepsis)

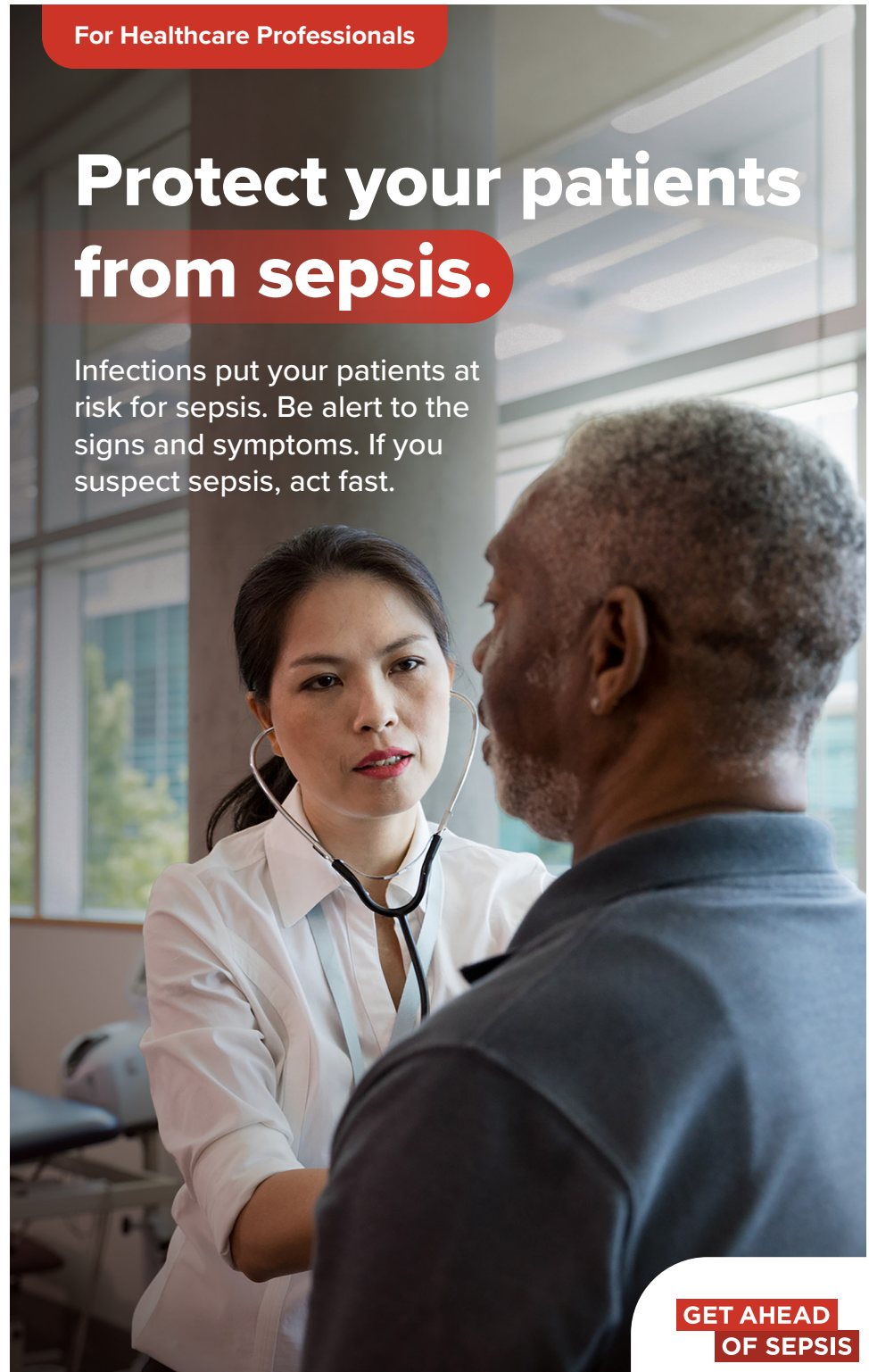


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For Healthcare Professionals

# Protect your patients from sepsis.

Infections put your patients at risk for sepsis. Be alert to the signs and symptoms. If you suspect sepsis, act fast.



**GET AHEAD  
OF SEPSIS**

## What are the signs and symptoms of sepsis?

A patient with sepsis might have one or more of the following signs or symptoms:



**High heart rate  
or weak pulse**



**Fever, shivering, or  
feeling very cold**



**Confusion or  
disorientation**



**Shortness of  
breath**



**Extreme pain  
or discomfort**



**Clammy or  
sweaty skin**

**You should immediately evaluate and treat patients who might have sepsis.**



## What is 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.

## What causes sepsis?

Infections put your patients at risk for sepsis. Bacterial infections cause most cases of sepsis. The most frequently identified bacterial pathogens that cause infections that can develop into sepsis include *Staphylococcus aureus* (staph), *Escherichia coli* (E. coli), and some types of *Streptococcus* (strep). Sepsis can also be a result of other infections, including viral infections, such as COVID-19 or influenza, or fungal infections.

## Who is at risk for sepsis?

**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 medical 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

**Anyone can get an infection, and almost any infection can lead to 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.
- **1 in 3 patients** who dies in a hospital had sepsis during that hospitalization.
- Most cases of sepsis start **before** a patient goes to the hospital.