

Protect children from 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 can put children at risk for sepsis. When germs get into a child's body, they can cause an infection. If you don't stop that infection, it can lead to sepsis. Bacterial infections cause most cases of sepsis. Sepsis can also be a result of other infections, including viral infections, such as COVID-19 or influenza, or fungal infections.

Is sepsis contagious?

You can't spread sepsis to other people. However, an infection can lead to sepsis, and you can spread some infections to other people.

Who is at risk for sepsis?

Anyone can develop sepsis, but some children may be at higher risk for sepsis:



People with weakened immune systems



People with chronic conditions, such as diabetes, lung disease, cancer, and kidney disease



People with recent severe illness, surgery, or hospitalization



People who survived sepsis

Anyone can get an infection, and almost any infection can lead to sepsis.

- Most sepsis cases in children and young adults start before they go to the hospital.¹
- Most children and young adults with sepsis have at least one underlying medical condition.^{1,2}
- Nearly a third of children and young adults with sepsis had a healthcare visit the week before they were hospitalized.¹

¹<https://doi.org/10.1093/ofid/ofad218>

²<https://doi.org/10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2020.6004>

**GET AHEAD
OF SEPSIS**

KNOW THE RISKS.
SPOT THE SIGNS.
ACT FAST.

How can I get ahead of sepsis?

You can take specific steps to reduce children's risk of sepsis:

1. Prevent infections

Take steps to prevent infections that can lead to sepsis:



Know your organization's medical staff and management plans for children with chronic conditions.



Ensure everyone is up to date on recommended vaccines—including yourself, children, and other participating adults.

2. Practice good hygiene

Remind children and staff:



Keep hands clean.



Keep cuts and wounds clean and covered until healed.

3. Know the signs and symptoms of sepsis

A child 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

Healthcare professionals should immediately evaluate and treat children who might have sepsis.

4. Act fast

Sepsis is a medical emergency. If your child 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 your child should go to the emergency room.

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

