

**Office of Integrated Health**  
**Health Information in a Nutshell**

Dr. Dawn M. Adams DNP, ANP-BC, CHC  
Director, Office of Integrated Health

## Sepsis

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### What is Sepsis?

Sepsis is a complication caused by the body's overwhelming and life-threatening response to an infection, which can lead to tissue damage, organ failure, and death. It can often be associated with infections of the lungs (e.g., pneumonia), urinary tract (e.g., kidneys), skin, and gut. Anyone can develop sepsis, but those who have a compromised immune system, people with chronic conditions (e.g., diabetes), children, and infants and the elderly are most vulnerable.

### Signs and Symptoms of Sepsis

There is no single sign or symptom of sepsis. Since sepsis is the result of an infection, symptoms can include infection signs (diarrhea, vomiting, sore throat, etc.), as well as shivering, fever, or very cold, extreme pain or discomfort, clammy or sweaty skin, confusion or disorientation, shortness of breath, or high heart rate.

### Sepsis Diagnosis and Treatment

In earlier stages, sepsis can be hard to diagnose because the symptoms are the same as many other conditions. Doctors utilize physical findings, such as fever, low blood pressure, increased heart rate, and increased breathing rate, and lab tests that check for signs of infections and organ damage to diagnose a person with sepsis. Treatment is carried out in the hospital, with antibiotics as soon as possible. The goal is to treat the infection and prevent any other complications. Doctors want to keep the vital organs working and prevent a drop in blood pressure.

### Prevention of [Topic]

To prevent sepsis, you must first prevent the initial infection. Vaccinations, prevention of infections that can lead to sepsis, knowing the signs and symptoms of infections, and practicing good hygiene (e.g., hand washing) are among the recommendations from the CDC to prevent sepsis.

### Recommendations

Awareness of risk is important. Be alert to symptoms of changes in a person's health status and seek guidance from a health professional for any changes. *With a change in any person's health status that results in acute care through an ED visit, Urgent Care visit, or hospitalization be sure to follow up on any recommended changes with the individuals usual Primary Care Provider.*

### Resources

CDC sepsis information- <http://www.cdc.gov/sepsis/>

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