



SEPSIS ALLIANCE

WWW.SEPSISALLIANCE.ORG

# Sepsis: Understanding Risk

***Sepsis occurs when an infection or injury causes your body to stop protecting you, and starts to attack you instead.***

***Anyone can be affected by sepsis, but certain people are more likely to get sepsis.***

***Your risk of sepsis may be lower if you get appropriate vaccinations, such as the flu shot and the pneumonia vaccine.***

Sepsis can affect anyone. Every year it affects 18 million men, women and children worldwide. Any kind of infection or injury anywhere in the body can trigger sepsis. Sepsis can develop rapidly, and you may see a relatively healthy person get very sick very quickly. While we don't know enough about sepsis, we know that certain people are more at risk of developing sepsis.

## **Risk**

Risk is defined as the likelihood of something happening. It is a statistical prediction based on what we know. However, risk is not a guarantee. Being in one of the risk categories, means you are more likely to be affected, but does NOT mean you will be affected.

## **Who is at risk?**

Sepsis can affect anyone, but certain individuals may have a greater risk of developing sepsis. This includes:

- People over the age of 65 and babies younger than 1 year of age
- Men
- People from non-white races
- People with cancer, liver disease, kidney disease, alcohol abuse and diseases or treatments that lower their immune (infection fighting) system.

## **How to reduce the risk of sepsis?**

The best way to reduce your risk of sepsis is to reduce your risk for infection. Washing your hands regularly is one way to reduce the risk of infection. This is very important when people are in the hospital. You should never let anyone touch you or your loved one when in the hospital unless they wash their hands first. Vaccinations, such as the flu shot and pneumonia shot, are another good way to reduce your risk of infection and sepsis. However, these are not good for all patients so discuss this with your medical team.

## **Talk to your medical team to understand your treatment options.**

**For more information:**

*Factsheets in the series:*

What is Sepsis?

Sepsis Treatment: A Glossary of Terms

*Websites:*

The Sepsis Alliance: [www.sepsisalliance.org](http://www.sepsisalliance.org)

International Sepsis Forum: [www.sepsisforum.org/whitebook.htm](http://www.sepsisforum.org/whitebook.htm)

Surviving Sepsis Campaign: [www.survivingsepsis.org](http://www.survivingsepsis.org)