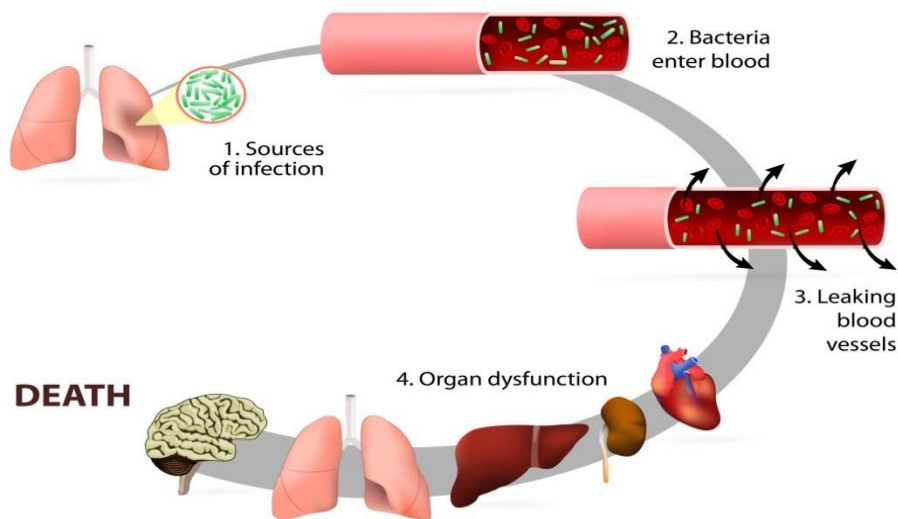




Sepsis

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People living with spinal cord injuries face a higher risk of developing sepsis than the general population. Understanding its causes and warning signs is critical as this life-threatening condition responds best to early and aggressive treatment.

Q: What is sepsis?

Sepsis is a dangerous medical condition that develops as the body urgently reacts to widespread inflammation or infection. Most cases are the result of a bacterial infection spreading in the bloodstream, but can sometimes be a complication of viral infections, including Covid-19 and influenza. Without immediate treatment, septic shock can develop, causing blood pressure to drop and preventing blood from reaching vital organs. Sepsis frequently originates in hospitals, where dangerous strains of bacteria can enter the body through an IV catheter. The

elderly, people with compromised immune systems, and those with chronic medical conditions are most at risk. As sepsis progresses, individuals may experience the following stages: sepsis, severe sepsis and sepsis shock.

Q: What types of secondary conditions of paralysis can lead to sepsis?

Though sepsis can be caused by something as simple as a cut, secondary conditions such as pneumonia, pressure sores and urinary tract infections can also lead to sepsis. To prevent these conditions from developing, maintain a healthy lifestyle and practice diligent self-care. Pay close attention to skin and treat pressure sores immediately. Empty bladder frequently and stay well-hydrated. Remain up to date on all vaccinations, and regularly clear and inflate lungs.

Q: What are the signs and symptoms of sepsis?

Symptoms of sepsis may include fever, shaking, chills, increased heart rate and rapid breathing. As septic shock develops, individuals may experience increasing confusion or disorientation, dizziness caused by low blood pressure and decreased urine output.

Q: When is sepsis an emergency?

Sepsis is always a medical emergency. Sepsis reduces blood flow throughout the body and can quickly cause permanent organ damage or death. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, sepsis affects at least 1.7 million adults each year and causes 270,000 deaths.

Q: How is sepsis diagnosed and treated?

Early and aggressive treatment with antibiotics, oxygen support and IV fluids administered directly into the vein is critical. Seek immediate treatment if you believe you or any family member is experiencing symptoms. Doctors will diagnose sepsis by drawing blood from two separate sites to test for infection, clotting issues, abnormal liver or kidney function, electrolyte imbalances and impaired oxygen availability. Urine samples and respiratory and wound secretions might also be assessed.

Q: What should I do to educate myself about sepsis?

Speak with your doctor or healthcare provider about risks specific to your injury and secondary conditions. If you are seeing your doctor for a secondary condition such as pneumonia or a urinary tract infection and you are not feeling well, ask your

doctor how long before you should feel better. If you don't feel better before then, return to your doctor. Be alert to symptoms; with early treatment, it is possible to recover from sepsis. And in case of an emergency, download or call the Reeve Foundation to receive a Sepsis Wallet Card which includes baseline body temperature and blood pressure, location of injury and emergency contacts. You should take this sepsis wallet card (filled out with your baseline blood pressure and temperature) with you to the emergency room.

Sources: Merck Manual, Mayo Clinic, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Need to talk to someone?

Our Information Specialists are available to answer your questions.

Call toll-free 1-800-539-7309 Mon-Fri, 9 am-8 pm EST.

Or schedule a call or ask a question online at <https://www.christopherreeve.org/get-support/ask-us-anything>.

Resources for Sepsis

Christopher & Dana Reeve Foundation: Sepsis Wallet Cards

<https://www.christopherreeve.org/cards>

Free sepsis wallet cards can be downloaded from our website or you can order a laminated version from the Reeve Foundation. The order form is online at the above link or you may call us toll-free 800-539-7309 x7224. Feel free to share the information on the card with your medical team as it was developed with the help of physicians at the Kennedy Krieger Institute and a nurse at Maryville University.

Sepsis Alliance

<https://www.sepsis.org/>

3180 University Ave., Suite 235

San Diego, CA 92104

Phone: 619-232-0300

Email: info@sepsisalliance.org

Sepsis Alliance is a non-profit organization that provides information on sepsis.

Cleveland Clinic: Sepsis

http://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/diseases_conditions/hic_Sepsis

International Sepsis Forum

<http://www.sepsisforum.org/>

KidsHealth: Sepsis

http://kidshealth.org/parent/pregnancy_center/newborn_health_conditions/sepsis.htm
|

Lucille Packard Children's Hospital at Stanford: Sepsis

<http://www.stanfordchildrens.org/en/topic/default?id=sepsis-90-P02410>

Medscape: Bacterial Sepsis

<http://emedicine.medscape.com/article/234587-overview>

Merck Manual for Health Care Professionals: Sepsis and Septic Shock

http://www.merckmanuals.com/professional/critical_care_medicine/sepsis_and_septic_shock/sepsis_and_septic_shock.html?qt=&sc=&alt=

Sepsis Awareness Today

<http://www.sepsisawarenesstoday.com/>

A site from a sepsis survivor to promote awareness of sepsis.

Surviving Sepsis Campaign

<http://www.survivingsepsis.org/>

Email: ssc@sccm.org

Wikipedia: Sepsis

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sepsis>

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This publication is supported by the Administration for Community Living (ACL), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) as part of a financial assistance award totaling \$10,000,000 with 100 percent funding by ACL/HHS. The contents are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official views of, nor an endorsement, by ACL/HHS, or the U.S. Government.