

# 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.

## 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.



Keep hands clean.



Keep cuts and wounds clean and covered until healed.

### 2. Practice good hygiene

Remind children, staff, and volunteers:

### 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 patients 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.

**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.<sup>1</sup>
- Most children and young adults with sepsis have at least one underlying medical condition.<sup>1,2</sup>
- Nearly a third of children and young adults with sepsis had a healthcare visit the week before they were hospitalized.<sup>1</sup>

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

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

**GET AHEAD OF SEPSIS**

KNOW THE RISKS. SPOT THE SIGNS. ACT FAST.

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

