

Act quickly

If you or your loved one is sick with one or more of the symptoms outlined on the previous page, take action immediately.

- Ring a doctor, medical centre, after hours clinic or Healthline (0800 611 116) right away – whether it is day or night
- If it's an emergency with the signs and the symptoms of sepsis dial 111
- Say what the symptoms are
- If you think it might be sepsis, **don't be put off. Insist on immediate action**
- Even if a person has been checked by a doctor, they should still be watched
- If they get worse go straight back to a doctor or the hospital. Tell medical staff if you have taken any medications (including your daily medicines) as these may mask the symptoms
- Don't leave the unwell person alone

**Sepsis is a medical emergency.
Time matters.**



Prevention

Taking reasonable steps to help prevent infections can help prevent sepsis from developing:

- Take good care of chronic illnesses/conditions such as diabetes and lung conditions
- Get recommended vaccinations
- Practice good hygiene, such as handwashing, and keeping cuts and wounds clean and covered until healed

If you or your loved one suspects sepsis or has an infection that's not getting better or is getting worse, JUST ASK your doctor or nurse

“COULD IT BE SEPSIS?”

For more information visit
sepsis.org.nz

Have an
infection?

**JUST ASK
“COULD IT BE SEPSIS?”**

What is sepsis?

Sepsis is your body's exaggerated response to infection which can cause it to injure its own tissues and vital organs. Sepsis is a life-threatening condition that can lead to tissue damage, organ failure, and death.

Many people have heard of "blood poisoning" (toto pirau) or "septicaemia" but **sepsis** is now the accepted term for this illness. It happens when an infection you already have – in your skin, lungs, urinary tract (pee/mimi), or somewhere else – triggers a chain reaction throughout your body.

Sepsis affects more than 1 in 100 people in New Zealand every year. It is a medical emergency, just like heart attack and stroke, but people with sepsis are five times more likely to die than people who have had a heart attack or stroke.

Who is at risk?

Anyone can get an infection, and almost any infection can lead to sepsis, but some people are at higher risk of infection and sepsis including:

- The very young and the very old
- People with chronic illnesses such as diabetes, lung disease, cancer, and kidney disease
- People with weakened immune systems (the way your body protects itself from infection), often because of treatment such as chemotherapy for cancer, or steroids for inflammatory conditions
- Women who are pregnant or who have recently given birth
- People who have an infection or complication after an operation or procedure.

Māori and Pacific people and individuals living in poverty are also at greater risk of developing sepsis in New Zealand.

What causes sepsis?

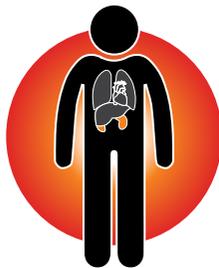
When microorganisms (germs), such as bacteria get into your body, they can cause an infection. If that infection isn't stopped, it can cause sepsis.



Slurred speech or confusion, or difficult to wake



Extrême shivering or muscle pain



Passing no urine (pee/mimi) for a day



Severe breathlessness or breathing very fast



It feels like you are going to die



Skin mottled, bluish, or pale or feels abnormally cold to touch

Signs and symptoms

Sepsis can develop quickly and is often very frightening and confusing for individuals and their family/whānau. It can be treated but early treatment is very important. At the start of the illness sepsis can look like influenza (flu) or a cold, gastroenteritis (tummy bug) or a chest infection (pneumonia), but people can then become worse very quickly. Sometimes a person can feel unwell and then feel better again before becoming very ill, very quickly.

Sepsis cannot be treated at home – it is important to get medical help straight away.

All the symptoms of sepsis may not show at once.

Seek medical help urgently if you or your loved one develops any or one of the following:

- S**lurred speech, confusion, or difficult to wake
- E**xtrême shivering or muscle pain
- P**assing no urine (pee/mimi) for a day
- S**evere breathlessness or breathing very fast
- I**t feels like you are going to die
- S**kin mottled, bluish, or pale or feels abnormally cold to touch (especially in children)

For any child under five who (as well as the signs and symptoms above):

- Is not feeding
- Is vomiting repeatedly
- Hasn't peed/mimi or had a wet nappy for 12 hours
- Has a rash that does not fade when you press it
- Has a "fit" or convulsion

Seek help immediately.