

Consumer Health: Sepsis is serious

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Nearly 270,000 people in the U.S. die each year as a result of sepsis, and one-third of people who die in a hospital have sepsis, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Sepsis occurs when the body's response to an infection damages its own

tissues. When these infection-fighting processes turn on the body, they cause organs to function poorly and abnormally.

As sepsis worsens, [blood flow](#) to vital organs, such as your brain, heart and kidneys, becomes impaired. Sepsis may cause abnormal blood clotting that results in small clots or burst blood vessels that damage or destroy tissues. If sepsis progresses to [septic shock](#), blood pressure drops dramatically, which can lead to death.

Early, aggressive treatment increases the likelihood of recovery. A number of medications are used in treating sepsis and septic shock, including antibiotics, corticosteroids, painkillers and sedatives. Supportive care, including oxygen and dialysis, and surgery to remove the source of the infection, also may be needed. People who have [sepsis](#) require close monitoring and treatment in a hospital ICU. Lifesaving measures may be needed to stabilize breathing and heart function.

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