Sepsis

Sepsis is a very serious illness. It is an infection that spreads quickly through the blood to infect the entire body. The infection is caused by germs called bacteria. Sepsis may cause your blood pressure to drop or small blood clots to form. The infection makes it hard for oxygen and nutrients to get to body organs, like the kidneys and lungs, and they may start to fail.

Sepsis may cause death in people who have weak immune systems or other health problems if their bodies are not able to fight infections.

**Signs**

Sepsis can occur in anyone with an injury or infection. Signs of sepsis may include:

- Confusion
- Fast breathing
- Chills or shaking
- Fever or low body temperature
- Fast heart beat
- Lightheadedness
- Less urine output
- Skin rash or skin color changes

More on next page ➔
Blood tests or other tests may be done to check for sepsis. Intravenous (IV) antibiotics, oxygen, and other medicines may be part of treatment. If body organs start to fail, other treatments may be needed.

**Who is at risk?**

Anyone can get sepsis, but certain people have a greater risk, such as:

- People with catheters
- Those with severe burns or trauma
- Babies younger than 1 year
- People over the age of 65
- Those with chronic diseases like liver disease, kidney disease or cancer
- Those who have weak immune systems because of treatments or illness

**Prevention**

The risk of sepsis is lower if infection is prevented. Hand washing is one of the best ways to reduce the spread of germs. Wash your hands often and well with soap and water or use alcohol based hand sanitizer. Be sure anyone helping with your care or visiting you also washes their hands before touching you. Vaccines, like the flu vaccine or pneumonia vaccine, can also help reduce your risk of infection.

Talk to your doctor or others on your health care team if you have questions. You may request more written information from the Library for Health Information at (614) 293-3707 or email: health-info@osu.edu.