To the Health Care Provider or First Responder

Positive outcomes of sepsis or septic shock are related to early diagnosis and treatment. Some individuals are diagnosed with sepsis that is mild. Recovery for these individuals can be complete without any residual deficits. However, sepsis and septic shock can result in complications that are very severe. Complications from sepsis and septic shock can be devastating. Damage to any body organ can occur as blood flow becomes impaired. Cess can form leading to lack of blood flow to body organs or to the extremities causing tissue death. Organ damage can lead to failure of brain, heart, lungs, kidney, liver or any body function. Damage to the extremities can lead to gangrene and thereby require amputation.

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GENERAL SYMPTOMS OF SEPSIS

Some or all of the following symptoms may be present:

• Presence of infection or possible infection
• Elevated temperature, greater than 38.3°C or 101.0°F
• Fast heart rate, greater than 90 beats per minute
• Fast respiratory rate, greater than 20 breaths per minute

Other symptoms that may be present:

• Confusion or coma
• Eclampsia especially in the extremities, neck, face
• Elevated blood sugar without diabetes
• Lower temperature below 36°C or 97°F

Diagnosis might also include components of these variables:

• Inflammation at the site of the initial infection or anywhere in the body
• Inability to maintain internal blood pressure to ensure that enough oxygen-carrying blood reaches all vital organs
• Organ dysfunction, failure of any internal organ
• Tissue perfusion, lack of oxygen to any part of the body, most readily seen in the fingers/arms, toes/feet

Sepsis is diagnosed when there is an infection somewhere in the body AND one of the following:

• organ dysfunction (organ failure)
• Hypoxemia (inability to circulate oxygen to your tissues)
• oliguria (decreased urine output)
• Lactic acidosis (drop in blood oxygen)
• Elevated liver enzymes (liver dysfunction)
• Altered cerebral function (convulsions/coma)

WHAT TO DO

Prevention is the best course of action for avoiding the development of sepsis.

Individuals should check with their health care provider for any infection that is not improving or seems to be increasing in symptoms such as redness, swelling, discomfort, pain, localized heat over the affected area or fever/chills. If you have an infection and experience any symptoms of increasing infection or body reactions, call or visit your healthcare provider immediately.

TESTS

Typical laboratory tests for infection are:

• Urine test for bacteria
• Wound cultures for bacteria
• Nasal and oral secretions for bacteria
• Blood tests for bacteria, clotting factors, cardiac, liver and kidney function, oxygenation or electrolytes

IMAGING STUDIES

Body scans might be done to assess internal organ function. These scans might include:

• X-rays
• CT scans (Computerized tomography)
• Ultrasound
• MRI (Magnetic resonance imaging)