

## Preventing, Recognizing, and Treating Sepsis

Sepsis is a complication caused by the body's overwhelming and life-threatening response to infection. It can lead to tissue damage, organ failure, and death. Sepsis is difficult to diagnose. It happens quickly and can be confused with other conditions early on. Sepsis is a medical emergency. Time matters. When sepsis is quickly recognized and treated, lives are saved. Healthcare providers are the critical link to preventing, recognizing, and treating sepsis. Sepsis is a real and present threat in long term and post-acute care settings.

Healthcare providers can:

- Prevent infections. Follow infection control requirements (e.g., hand hygiene) and ensure patients receive recommended vaccines (e.g., flu and pneumococcal).
- Educate patients and their families. Stress the need to prevent infections, manage chronic conditions, and seek care if signs of severe infection or sepsis are present.
- Think sepsis. Know sepsis signs and symptoms to identify and treat patients early.
- Act fast. If sepsis is suspected, order tests to determine if an infection is present, where it is, and what caused it. Start antibiotics and other medical care immediately. Document antibiotic dose, duration, and purpose.

Reassess patient management. Check patient progress frequently. Reassess antibiotic therapy 24-48 hours or sooner to change therapy as needed. Be sure the antibiotic type, dose, and duration are correct.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has tremendous resources to address sepsis. To learn more, visit [www.cdc.gov/hai](http://www.cdc.gov/hai).

To learn more about NADONA's Infection Preventionist Board Certification, please visit: <https://www.nadona.org/product/infection-prev-ip-bc-certification/>. NADONA also offers a host of continuing education

Author:

J. Hudson Garrett Jr., PhD, MSN, MPH, FNP-BC, PLNC, VA-BC, GDCN, IP-BC, CDONA, FACDONA  
Chief Clinical Officer  
Editor-In-Chief, The Director: Journal of the National Association of Directors of Nursing Administration/LTC  
Master Trainer/NADONA  
Global Chief Clinical Officer  
Pentax Medical