Sepsis

What Is Sepsis?
Sepsis is a severe infection that spreads throughout the body. This infection may occur when you have an existing injury or infection. Germs (bacteria) travel through the blood stream to body organs, such as the lungs or kidneys. Widespread infection makes it hard for these organs to receive needed oxygen and nutrients. When this occurs, organs can be damaged and may start to fail.

Sepsis may cause death in people who are not able to fight the infection. This most often occurs when the immune system is weak or there are other health problems.

Are You at Risk for Sepsis?
You are at a higher risk for sepsis if you have a:
• Catheter
• Severe burn or trauma
• Chronic disease
• Weak immune system

Babies (under age 1 year) and older people (over age 65) also are more likely to get sepsis.

What Are the Symptoms of Sepsis?
Signs of sepsis may include:
• Confusion
• Low blood pressure
• Chills or shaking
• Skin rash or color change
• Fast breathing
• Fever or low body temperature
• Fast heart rate
• Feel lightheaded
• Less urine output
• Small blood clots may form

How Is Sepsis Treated?
Sepsis will make you very sick, very quickly. Antibiotics and intravenous fluids (given through a needle in your vein) must be given right away. Other treatments may be needed if body organs start to fail.

You Can Help Prevent Sepsis
• Wash your hands often to prevent the spread of infection. Use soap and water or use an alcohol based hand sanitizer.
• Ask anyone who visits or care for you to wash their hands before touching you.
• Be sure you receive the yearly flu vaccine and the pneumonia vaccine if recommended.