

## SEPSIS

### What is Sepsis?

- When the body reacts to an infection with a severe inflammatory response.
- Can be caused by bacteria, fungus or a virus.
- Can lead to severe low blood pressure, shock, organ failure and death if not treated.
- Prevalent in adults 65 years and older

### Most Common Causes of Sepsis

- Infection - Blood infections, pneumonia, meningitis, and urinary tract infections
- Illnesses - Cancer, diabetes, kidney and liver disease
- Immune system disease - HIV or Aids; taking medication that affects the immune system
- Severe injury and burns
- Chemotherapy medications, steroids, or radiation
- Individuals in intensive care units with implanted devices, central venous line, or urinary catheters.

### Signs and Symptoms of Sepsis

- High fever
- Shaking and chills
- Low blood pressure
- Rapid breathing
- Rapid heartbeat
- Shortness of breath
- Confusion - can lead to coma
- Dizziness
- Severe nausea and vomiting
- Decreased urination
- Severe pain including the back and joints

### When to Seek Emergency Medical Attention

***Sepsis is a medical emergency. Call 911 if an individual has a fever with the following symptoms.***

- Chills and shaking
- Increased heart rate and breathing
- Trouble breathing
- Decreased urination
- Severe nausea or uncontrolled vomiting
- Confusion, disorientation, drowsiness, or dizziness

## Treatment for Sepsis

- Must be treated in the hospital - often the intensive care unit
- IV antibiotics and fluids
- May need oxygen mask or ventilator to help with breathing
- May include medicine to increase blood pressure
- Treatment may last 7-10 days
- Can be fatal even with aggressive treatment

## Prevention and Caring for an Individual with I/DD who has Sepsis

- Never delay medical attention; if left untreated, the results can be fatal.
- Be aware of behavioral cues in individuals who cannot voice their needs. Observe for any changes in baseline behavior. Examples: refusing to eat, lethargic and not wanting to get out of bed, decreased need to urinate, refusing to participate in activities they usually enjoy, grimacing in pain
- Advocate for the individuals you care for by educating yourself as to who is at risk, observe for signs and symptoms and report immediately to your provider following proper chain of command.
- Encourage healthy practices, including good hand hygiene to prevent infection.

## References

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