What is Sepsis?

Even though your immune system protects you from bacteria and viruses, you can still get an infection. Normally when you have an infection, your body releases substances into the bloodstream to fight the infection.

But in some instances, your body's defense system gets overwhelmed, the infection takes over and causes a severe unhealthy response. This extreme reaction is called Sepsis. Sepsis can be mild to severe. As sepsis worsens, it can damage many of your organs and cause blood clots to form. Without treatment, Sepsis can lead to damage to your body and organs, severe illness, and even death.

Most sepsis is caused by bacterial infections, but it can also be a result of other infections, like viral infections. Anyone can get an infection, and almost any infection can lead to sepsis. Some people are at higher risk for Sepsis including people 65 years and older, people with weakened immune systems, people with chronic medical conditions such as diabetes, lung disease and cancer, and children younger than one year old. While there is no one specific sign or symptom of Sepsis, there are several warning signs health care providers must watch out for.

> *"This may be someone that has low blood pressure. This may be someone that has elevated temperature. This may be someone that is confused or has an altered mental state. Those are key signs that we will look for. If we think that someone may be becoming septic, or may be entering a septic phase, we will move very quickly to adequately diagnose this and begin early treatment."*

If you are in the hospital and notice any of these symptoms tell your healthcare provider right way. Sepsis starts with an infection so the best way to prevent sepsis, is to do all you can to prevent an infection. Practice good hygiene, such as washing your hands and keeping cuts clean and covered until healed.

If you do get an infection, talk to your healthcare provider about how to treat it so it doesn't progress to sepsis. And don't ignore the warning signs that your infection is getting worse. If you have an infection that's not getting better or you notice these symptoms in a loved one, talk to your healthcare provider and get medical help immediately.

For more information about Sepsis, visit cdc.gov.