

Sepsis is Always an Emergency



Sepsis causes 20 percent of deaths worldwide: take immediate action if suspected.

Sepsis is responsible for around one fifth¹ of deaths worldwide. The disease is caused by an excessive reaction of the immune system, which subsequently turns against its own body. Because the symptoms are non-specific, sepsis is often detected very late, potentially leading to serious long-term consequences. On the occasion of World Sepsis Day on the 13th of September, AOP Health calls to mind the disease and its symptoms.

Those affected describe an unprecedented, severe feeling of illness, symptoms resembling those of a serious case of influenza as well as fatigue and apathy. Sepsis experts add that patients also notice sudden confusion, fast, heavy breathing, increased heart rate, and lowered blood pressure as well as cold, patchy skin on their arms and legs². This is due to an infection that spreads uncontrollably from its source throughout the body. The excessively activated immune system is consequently directed against one's own organs, which can lead to serious bodily damage and even death.

Early detection can save lives

Due to the indeterminate signs, not only those affected but also treatment teams tend to react late – often resulting in fatal consequences. Private lecturer Dr. Matthias Gründling, Head of the Sepsis Dialogue at the University Medical Center Greifswald, comments:

Any sepsis is an absolute emergency. In Germany, every six minutes a person dies due to sepsis. Anyone who suspects to be affected due to the symptoms mentioned above should inform first responders immediately. This notice could save valuable diagnostic time and keep consequential damage to a minimum.

Dr. Matthias Gründling

Head of the SepsisDialogue at the University Medical Center Greifswald



Avoiding infections

Essentially, all people, from newborns to seniors, can be affected. Anyone with a weakened immune system as a result of a chronic or serious illness such as cancer or diabetes is particularly at risk. The risk of developing sepsis is also increased in very young or old people. Therefore, prevention is especially important in this disease. Dr. Gründling emphasizes: „You can reduce the risk of developing sepsis by avoiding infections, for example, by getting vaccinated or by observing hygiene measures such as hand washing or wound disinfection.”

Spreading knowledge

In order to save lives and avoid consequential damage, there is an urgent need to educate the population about the disease. The Austrian pharmaceutical company AOP Orphan Pharmaceuticals GmbH (AOP Health), which specializes in the treatment of rare diseases and in intensive care medicine, is therefore committed to creating awareness for the disease and its symptoms.

Dr. Hugo Leodolter, Director Medical Affairs, AOP Health Austria: "Globally, more than twice as many people in hospitals die from sepsis than from stroke and heart attack combined. Therefore, people should know more about sepsis and its consequences." Leodolter recommends the website of the US organization [Sepsis Alliance](#) as an information platform or the German sepsis campaign [„Deutschland erkennt Sepsis“](#).

Not leaving alone those affected

Manuela Gerber, SepsisDialog team, University Medical Center Greifswald, points out that sepsis survivors often face severe consequential damage. These range from attention deficits to problems with balance, sleep disturbances and fatigue, to dysfunction of organs or amputation of limbs. While they are usually well cared for in the hospital, many survivors feel overwhelmed and left alone as soon as they return home.

Manuela Gerber explains:



Surviving sepsis pushes patients to their physical and emotional limits. It is important to accompany them well after their stay in the hospital, both medically and psychologically. The latter also applies to relatives who are often overwhelmed.

Manuela Gerber

SepsisDialog Team, University Medical Center Greifswald

She recommends that relatives seek help and support from their national sepsis organizations. She reckons: „It is important to have contact persons or at least to be able to get tips on how to better deal with the situation.“

Unburdening the health system

Leodolter also points to another dimension that can be mitigated with better early detection. He says:

Early detection and treatment initiation, in conjunction with survivor rehabilitation programs, could help reduce the long-term burden of the effects of sepsis on the health care system and on society.

Dr. Hugo Leodolter

Director Medical Affairs, AOP Health Austria



Source & Image Credit: [AOP Health](#)

Reference:

¹ Bundesministerium für Soziales, Gesundheit, Pflege und Konsumentenschutz (BMSGPK) (Hg.); Konsensuspapier Sepsis, 2024 (page 8).

² <https://www.deutschland-erkennt-sepsis.de/> ">Wie kann ich eine Sepsis erkennen?", 11.06.2024

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