

What is Sepsis?

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Transcript

[0:00 Introduction]

Dr. Alison Fox-Robichaud: Here's what you need to know about sepsis. My name is Dr. Alison Fox-Robichaud. I am a professor of medicine at McMaster University, Scientific Director of Sepsis Canada, and a critical care physician at Hamilton Health Sciences.

[What is sepsis? 0:14]

Dr. Alison Fox-Robichaud: What is sepsis? Sepsis is the life-threatening response to an infection. It may start as a pneumonia, often a common one, but can lead to dysfunction of the brain, the kidney, the bowels, the skin, the heart, in terms of not being able to generate enough blood pressure. It can affect anyone at any age, very young and the very old. People with an altered immune system or chronic illnesses are the most susceptible. It affects 45 to 50 million individuals every year, and one in five of those will not survive.

Once you survive sepsis or get through an episode of sepsis, the journey's not over. People who have post-sepsis syndrome can have changes to their memory, to their muscle function, and may not, in fact, be able to go back to work. We've also learned recently that people who have sepsis are also at increased risk of other diseases, such as heart attacks, strokes, and blood clots.

[How to prevent sepsis 1:14]

Dr. Alison Fox-Robichaud: What can we do to prevent sepsis? Sepsis can be prevented by vaccination. During the COVID pandemic, we decreased the rate of people needing ICU for COVID infections because of the vaccine. But the same can be said for other vaccines, including the flu vaccine, the pneumonia vaccine that occurs for our children. The vaccine against meningitis is important in preventing sepsis. Sepsis can also be prevented by making sure you have adequate hand hygiene, clean water, and just being aware that if you have an infection and are feeling horribly unwell, you should seek medical attention quickly.

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