Surgery is a procedure that affects your body in many ways aside from the actual reason for the operation. Any type of surgery from an appendectomy to a face lift to a Cesarean section exposes your body to infection and a fair number of complications, some of which could develop into sepsis.

Sometimes incorrectly called blood poisoning, sepsis is the body’s often deadly response to infection or injury. Sepsis kills and disables millions and requires early suspicion and rapid treatment for survival.

Once sepsis sets in, if left untreated, it can progress to septic shock and death. Worldwide, one-third of people who develop sepsis die. Many who do survive are left with life-changing effects, such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), chronic pain and fatigue, organ dysfunction (don’t work properly) and/or amputations.

SEPSIS CAUSES

Infection after surgery can cause sepsis. This could be infection of the incision, the opening in the skin, or an infection that develops after the surgery, such as pneumonia or a urinary tract infection (UTI).

When you have surgery, it is important to monitor the incision, watching it for signs of infection. These include:

- Increasing redness around the incision
- Pus or other fluid coming from the incision
- Warmer than usual skin around the incision
- Increased pain around the incision
- Fever
- Fatigue

Pneumonia is not uncommon after having surgery, which is why it is important to get up and about as quickly as is possible after the operation. Deep breathing and coughing exercises are also helpful in keeping your lungs clear. Patients who were placed on a ventilator to help them breathe are also at higher risk for developing pneumonia.

Other infections, such as UTIs may develop if you had to be catheterized (a tube inserted into your bladder). The longer the catheter remains in place, the higher the risk of infection.
SEPSIS IS A MEDICAL EMERGENCY

IF YOU SUSPECT SEPSIS, CALL 9-1-1
OR GO TO A HOSPITAL RIGHT AWAY

WHAT IS SEPSIS

SEPSIS is the body’s overwhelming and life-threatening response to infection, which can lead to tissue damage, organ failure, and death.

What are the signs and symptoms of sepsis?

Sepsis is a toxic response to an infection. There is no single sign or symptom of sepsis. It is, rather, a combination of symptoms. Symptoms can include ANY of the following:

- **S** — Shivering, fever, or very cold
- **E** — Extreme pain or general discomfort (“worst ever”)
- **P** — Pale or discolored skin
- **S** — Sleepy, difficult to rouse, confused
- **I** — “I feel like I might die”
- **S** — Short of breath

What should I do if I think a loved one or I have sepsis?

If you suspect sepsis, call 9-1-1 or go to a hospital and tell your medical professional, “I AM CONCERNED ABOUT SEPSIS.”

To learn more about sepsis, or to read tributes and survivor stories, visit us online at Sepsis.org