

Let's Talk About...

Sepsis in newborns

Sepsis is an infection that affects the entire body. It can be caused by either a bacteria or a virus. When sepsis is caused by bacteria, it may have begun growing in the bloodstream, urine, or the fluid around the spinal cord. While viral infections are usually less dangerous, they can also make babies sick. Healthcare providers usually need tests to tell what is causing the infection.

Fortunately, if sepsis is recognized and treated early, most babies will make a full recovery.

Which babies are at risk for sepsis?

Noticing sepsis early isn't always easy. Many babies won't have signs of infection until later. Your baby has a higher risk of getting sepsis if:

- They were born prematurely
- Your water broke (membranes ruptured) early
- You had an infection of the fluid and membranes (chorioamnionitis) while caring the baby
- You tested positive for group B strep (GBS) bacteria or received antibiotics for GBS

What are the signs of sepsis?

The signs of sepsis may include:

- Fast or noisy breathing
- Fever
- Low temperature
- Not eating well
- Diarrhea
- Vomiting
- Being sleepy and hard to wake up
- Being fussy and hard to calm down
- Jaundice
- Change in skin color (pale, patchy, or blue)

Your baby's healthcare provider may be worried about sepsis for other reasons. If you have questions, ask your baby's healthcare provider.



