

Pregnancy & Childbirth and Sepsis

Maternal sepsis is a leading cause of pregnancy-related deaths in the United States.

What is maternal sepsis? It is a life-threatening condition defined as organ dysfunction resulting from infection during pregnancy, childbirth, post-abortion or miscarriage, or postpartum period. Early recognition of sepsis is key to saving mothers' lives.

What to look out for if you are pregnant or recently gave birth:

**Fever above
100.4 F**

**Foul smelling
discharge from
the vagina or a
wound**

**Difficulty
breathing or
shortness of
breath**

Chest pain

**Feeling
confused or just
“not right”**

**Non-specific
or general
abdominal pain
that appears, or
gets much worse
suddenly**



If you experience a combination of these symptoms, call 911, or seek emergency care and say, “I’m concerned about sepsis!”

Watch out for urinary tract infections (UTI) as they are a common cause of maternal sepsis.

Risk Factors:

You are at a greater risk of developing maternal sepsis if you have:

- Diabetes
- Mastitis (inflammation and/or infection in the breast tissue)
- Viral or bacterial infection, such as a UTI

*Obesity may also increase your risk of developing sepsis.

Or had:

- A cesarean section
- Prolonged or obstructed labor
- Premature ruptured membranes
- Cerclage (cervical stitch)
- Placental abruption (placenta breaks away from the uterine wall)
- Emergency surgery
- Miscarriage, or induced abortion
- Limited or no prenatal care

For more information, please visit sepsis.org