

Pregnancy, Childbirth, and Sepsis

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

Maternal sepsis develops during pregnancy, while or after giving birth, or after an abortion or miscarriage. Sepsis is the body's life-threatening response to an infection. 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 a wound or vagina
- » 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 infection (UTIs) and other *E. coli* infections as they are a common cause of maternal sepsis.

Obesity may also increase your risk of developing 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)
- Dry cracked nipples
- Viral or bacterial infection, such as a UTI

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