Boulder Community Health

PATIENT EDUCATION

Sepsis Stoplight Tool

Common infections can sometimes lead to sepsis. Sepsis is a deadly response to an infection. Use the information below to keep yourself safe. If you feel like you are getting sick or have questions about sepsis, call your doctor.

Green: All Clear Zone		
	• My heartbeat and breathing feel normal for me. • I don't have chills or feel cold. • My energy level is normal. • I can think clearly. • Any wound or IV site I have is healing well.	What it means: • You have no signs of infection. • Keep following the instructions your doctor gave you.
Yellow: Warning Zone		
	• My heartbeat feels faster than usual. • My breathing is fast, or I'm coughing. • I have a fever between 100.0°F and 101.4°F. • I feel cold and am shivering; I can't get warm. • My thinking is slow; my head feels fuzzy. • I don't feel well; I'm too tired to do things. • I haven't urinated (peed) in 5 hours or it is painful when I do. • Any wound or IV site I have looks different.	What it means: • You should contact your doctor, especially if you have been sick or had surgery recently.
Red: Danger Zone		
	• I feel sick, very tired, weak, and achy. • My heartbeat or breathing is very fast. • My temperature is 101.5°F or greater. • My temperature is below 96.8°F. • My fingernails are pale or blue. • People say I'm not making sense. • My wound or IV site is painful, red, smells, or has pus.	What it means: • You need to call your doctor if you are in this zone. • **Call 911 if needed!**

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How to Help Prevent Infection

- Wash your hands well and often with soap and water or hand sanitizer, especially after touching things like doorknobs and handrails.



- Get any vaccinations your doctor recommends. Vaccinations prevent infections caused by viruses.

- Cuts and scrapes provide a way for bacteria to get into your body. Clean any break in your skin right away and keep it clean as it heals.



- Know the signs and symptoms of infection including:
  - High heart rate
  - Fever, shivering, or feeling very cold
  - Confusion
  - Shortness of breath
  - Extreme pain
  - Clammy or sweaty skin

- If you feel like you are sick, call your doctor or get to a hospital right away!

This material is for informational purposes only. It does not replace the advice or counsel of a physician or health care professional. BCH makes every effort to provide information that is accurate and timely, but makes no guarantee in this regard. You should consult with, and rely on the advice of your physician or health care professional. Last reviewed: 11/2025