

Health Trends

Sepsis Awareness Month

Since 2011 the Sepsis Alliance has designated **September** as Sepsis Awareness Month. The main message from the Sepsis Alliance is **Infection Prevention is Sepsis Prevention!™** (6).

Sepsis Alliance Awareness Month Information

What is Sepsis?

Sepsis is a life-threatening emergency response by the body due to infection entering the blood stream. Sepsis can cause damage to the major organs of the body and lead to death if not caught in time (6).

In the U.S. over 1.7 million people, or 350,000 adults, die from sepsis each year. In U.S. hospitals sepsis is the leading cause of death (6).



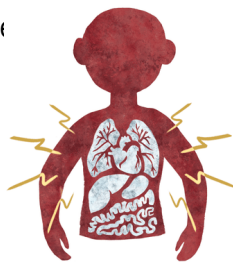
Risk of Sepsis

Anyone with an infection is at risk for developing sepsis. Individuals with weakened immune systems, the very young, and older adults are at highest risk for sepsis (1). If an individual has any history of sepsis, caregivers should call 911 with the first signs of sepsis and be sure to tell EMS the individual has a history of sepsis because they will enact their sepsis protocol (5).

Signs and Symptoms

An individual with sepsis might experience one or more of the following signs and symptoms:

- Clammy or sweaty skin.
- Confusion or disorientation.
- Extreme pain or discomfort.
- Fever, shivering or feeling very cold.
- High heart rate or weak pulse.
- Shortness of breath.



Causes of Sepsis

Any type of infection, especially untreated infections, can lead to sepsis. Bacterial infections are the most common types of infections associated with sepsis, but fungal infections and viral infections, such as influenza and COVID-19 can also develop into sepsis (1).

Why is TIME so Important?

80% of deaths from sepsis could be avoided with immediate diagnosis and treatment. The risk of death increases by 4% - 9% every hour treatment is prolonged (6).

When it comes to sepsis, remember **IT'S ABOUT TIME™**. Watch for:

T	I	M	E
TEMPERATURE higher or lower than normal	INFECTION may have signs and symptoms of an infection	MENTAL DECLINE confused, sleepy, difficult to rouse	EXTREMELY ILL severe pain, discomfort, shortness of breath

If you experience a combination of these symptoms: seek urgent medical care, call 911, or go to the hospital with an advocate. Ask: "Could it be sepsis?"

©2020 Sepsis Alliance sepsis.org SEPSIS ALLIANCE

Sepsis and Individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disability (IDD)

- Sepsis has been identified as the three most common cause of death in the DD population (2).
- Due to reduced immune response individuals diagnosed with a genetically linked developmental disorders, such as Down's syndrome, DiGeorge syndrome and/or Trisomy 21, are at an increased risk for developing infections and sepsis (3).
- Individuals with IDD may need assistance to understand ways of preventing the spread of infection, such as handwashing or practicing good overall hygiene (4).
- Caregivers should encourage regular daily hygiene practices, help individuals attend all physician appointments, report any physical or mental changes immediately, make sure individuals receive all recommended vaccinations, along with recognizing and diagnosing infection quickly to lower the risk of developing sepsis (6).
- Communication limitations may prevent individuals from expressing early symptoms therefore they should be monitored closely for changes in their physical or mental health (1).

Please direct questions or concerns regarding the "Health Trends" newsletter to the Office of Integrated Health Supports Network (OIHSN) at communitynursing@dbhds.virginia.gov

Reference

1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). (2024, March). About sepsis. National Center for Emerging and Zoonotic Infectious Diseases (NCEZID).
2. Grant, N., Hewitt, O., Ash, K., & Knott, F. (2022). The experiences of sepsis in people with a learning disability—a qualitative investigation. *British Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 50(4), 514–524.
3. Huggard, D., McGrane, F., Lagan, N., Roche, E., Balfe, J., Leahy, T.R., Franklin, O., Moreno, A., Melo, A.M., Doherty, D.G., & Mollay, E.J. (2018). Altered endotoxin responsiveness in healthy children with Down syndrome. *BMC Immunology*, 19(31), 1-10.
4. Mills, W. R., Sender, S., Lichtfeld, J., Romano, N., Reynolds, K., Price, M., Phipps, J., White, L., Howard, S., Poltavski, D. & Barnes, R. (2020, July). Supporting individuals with intellectual and developmental disability during the first 100 days of the COVID-19 outbreak in the USA. *Journal of Intellectual Disability Research*, 64(7), 489–496.
5. Navarro, K. (2015, December). Sepsis detection and monitoring in EMS. EMS-1 [Internet].
6. Sepsis Alliance. (2024, August). Sepsis awareness month toolkit.

Health Trends



September 2025 is National Alzheimer's Month

An international campaign to raise dementia awareness and challenge stigma has been held for the past 14 years. Each year, Alzheimer and dementia associations, alongside all those involved in the treatment, care and support of people living with dementia, from around the world unite to organize advocacy and information provision events, as well as Memory Walks and fundraising days.

Facts:

- Dementia is a term used to describe different brain disorders that affect memory, thinking, behavior and emotion.
- Early symptoms of dementia can include memory loss, difficulty performing familiar tasks, problems with language and changes in personality.
- There is currently no cure for dementia, but a range of support is available for people with dementia and their caregivers.
- Dementia knows no social, economic, or ethnic boundaries.
- Alzheimer's disease is the most common cause of dementia. Other causes include vascular disease, dementia with Lewy bodies and frontotemporal dementia.

Reference

[Alzheimer's Disease International \(ADI\). \(n.d.\). World Alzheimer's month toolkit. 1-31.](#)

Coming soon...

The Office of Integrated Health Supports Network (OIHSN) is in the final stages of developing the Dementia Caregiver Training for Individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD). Presented by OIHSN at the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services (DBHDS).

This training is based on the National Task Group on Intellectual Disabilities and Dementia Practices (NTG).



Who Should Attend?

Caregivers, direct support professionals, and service providers supporting individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) who may also be experiencing dementia.

Training Overview:

Gain practical strategies and insights to support aging individuals with IDD who are at risk for or are experiencing dementia.

This full-day training will cover:

- Early signs of dementia in individuals with IDD
- Communication and behavior changes
- Health advocacy and care planning
- Environmental and daily care adaptations
- Tools and resources for ongoing support

ABA SNIPPETS ...

Back To School: Behavioral Terms 101 – Part 2

Last month we reviewed some ABA terminology. This month, we will continue to discuss a few more terms that have more than one use/meaning, specifically related to graphs. Kubina et al., (2017) reviewed line graphs in behavior analytic publications and noted there are some essential structures and quality features to the graphs.

While there are many elements that make up a good graph, we are only going to focus on graph terminology that have different meanings in everyday language. One such element is **baseline** data. Baseline, in behavior analysis, is not referring to the white chalk line that runs from home plate through first base. It is the period when a specific independent variable is absent (Cooper et al., 2020). The graph should indicate where the baseline period ends and the intervention begins, using a change line. There are **condition** change lines and **phase** change lines. You may think of condition as in the status of something: "What condition is that used car in?" or hear phase and think of moon phases, or that time your child engaged in a certain behavior, and you desperately hoped it was "just a phase." What we are referring to here are vertical lines on the graph that separate the data to indicate a change in the overall phase or condition of a study, or intervention. Lastly, there are **trend** lines. We all know of Tik Tok trends, but data trends are where it's at. Trend lines on a graph show the overall direction of a data path (Cooper et al., 2020).

When graphs include essential structures and quality features, they provide a means for quick visual analysis of the data, which guides treatment decisions. Graphs are also a critical part of the BSPARI review process. For more information on BSPARI requirements for graphed data, check out this brief video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=er1wCxM7eS8>

You may contact DBHDS about these efforts via the following:

Courtney.Pernick@dbhds.virginia.gov

References:

1. Cooper, J.O., Heron, T.E., & Heward, W.L. (2020). Applied behavior analysis: Third edition. Pearson Education, Inc.
2. Kubina, R. M., Kostewicz, D. E., Brennan, K. M., & King, S. A. (2017). A critical review of line graphs in behavior analytic journals. Educational Psychology Review, 29(3), 583-598. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10648-015-9339-x>

App of the Month



MindMate is a free app, available for Apple, Android, and computers, offers brain games and workouts to help with attention, memory, problem-solving, and cognitive speed. MindMate also features other tools to stimulate brain and general health, promoting good nutrition, physical exercise, mental stimulation, and social interaction. The site allows you to take a memory test online and promptly emails you your results. (App of the Month is not endorsed by DBHDS Office of Integrated Health-Health Supports Network. User accepts full responsibility for utilization of app).