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# Sepsis Awareness Among American Adults Returns to Pre-Pandemic Level of 65%

**SEPTEMBER 10, 2021**

*A dip in awareness coincides with growing concern about health inequities; Sepsis Alliance recognizes the continued need for public education about sepsis signs, symptoms, after-effects, and community disparities.*

To mark World Sepsis Day, Sepsis Alliance is announcing the results of the 2021 annual sepsis awareness survey. The survey, conducted by Radius Global Market Research, measures awareness of the term “sepsis” as well as knowledge of sepsis and its after-effects in a representative population of United States adults. Awareness of the term “sepsis” returned to its 2019 level of 65% this year, with Black adults showing the lowest awareness of the term and white adults the highest. Additionally, over 40% of American adults do not know that sepsis is a complication of an infection and 58% are not aware of post-sepsis syndrome, highlighting the need for further targeted sepsis education.

Sepsis, the body’s overwhelming and life-threatening response to infection, affects an estimated 49 million people worldwide each year. More than 1.7 million people in the U.S. are diagnosed with sepsis each year and 270,000 of those people die. Sepsis is also the most common complication observed in severe cases of COVID-19. Sepsis Alliance, the nation’s first and leading sepsis organization, strives to save lives and reduce suffering by improving sepsis awareness and care through public and healthcare provider education programs, survivor support, and patient advocacy. As many as 80% of septic shock patients can be saved with rapid diagnosis and treatment.

The 2021 awareness level of 65% is a return to the pre-pandemic awareness level reported in 2018 and 2019. The heightened interest in medical information at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic may have been responsible for the jump in awareness to 71% in 2020.

The survey also found that those who identify as white are significantly more likely to be aware of the term “sepsis” (67%) than those who identify as Black (57%), though according to one study, Black and “other nonwhite” individuals have nearly twice the incidence of sepsis as white individuals. Sepsis Alliance has become increasingly aware of disparities in healthcare based on socioeconomic status, race, and other factors and has made an organization-wide commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) work. This includes the release of an internal EDI pledge to help close gaps in patient outcomes, augment the mission statement, and continue making good on the initial and enduring promise: to reduce the suffering caused by sepsis. Sepsis Alliance then invited corporate, nonprofit, and healthcare partners who work to mitigate the global challenges associated with sepsis to join the organization in fostering health equity.

Though it is important to recognize the word “sepsis,” it is also important to understand what sepsis is. This year’s survey found that over 40% of adults state that they do not know sepsis is a complication of an infection. Without that knowledge, people may not seek emergency care should sepsis symptoms develop after an infection. Sepsis Alliance launched the Sepsis: It’s About TIME™ campaign in 2018 to share the signs and symptoms of sepsis and the need to seek urgent medical attention should those signs and symptoms present; “TIME” is an easy-to-remember mnemonic, with the “I” indicating “infection.”

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deaths, relative to the size of the Black population, as compared to white Americans, and have the lowest awareness of sepsis. While there are many factors contributing to those disparities, public awareness and education geared towards Black adults can help reduce disparities and save Black lives.

As organizations, individuals, and companies, everyone can help save lives by increasing sepsis awareness, especially amongst the most vulnerable and affected populations. Here are some ways you can join this movement:

**As an individual:**

You can educate others in your community with Sepsis Alliance's free awareness materials! Perform a Sepsis 911 presentation, print pamphlets to pass out on your daily walk, or share graphics on social media, to help spread the word about sepsis and why it is important to know the signs and symptoms.

Are you a sepsis survivor or did you lose somebody to sepsis? You can also share your sepsis story with the Faces of Sepsis™ community to help raise awareness.

**As a company or organization:**

You can join Sepsis Alliance in taking the pledge towards equity, diversity, and inclusion in the medical field. Learn more about the pledge and sign on at HealthEquityPledge.org.

You can also include information about sepsis in company newsletters, on the team Slack channel, or with a printout in the break room. Start the conversation and you'll likely be surprised how many people have known sepsis personally or as a caregiver, and they will appreciate your company's concern and educational efforts.

Sepsis Alliance, the first and leading sepsis organization in the U.S., seeks to save lives and reduce suffering by improving sepsis awareness and care. More than 1.7 million people are diagnosed with sepsis each year in the U.S. with more than 270,000 dying and over 50% of survivors experiencing post-sepsis syndrome and other lingering effects, including amputations. At Sepsis Alliance's founding in 2003, only 19% of U.S. adults were aware of the term "sepsis." After over ten years of educational efforts for the general public and healthcare providers through Sepsis.org, Sepsis Alliance Clinical Community, Sepsis Alliance Institute, and Sepsis Alliance Voices, awareness is at 65% with over 30,000 healthcare providers across the country having attended sepsis webinars and courses to elevate their practice and over 28 Sepsis Awareness Month state proclamations. Sepsis Alliance is a 501(c)3 nonprofit and a GuideStar Platinum Rated charity. For more information, please visit [www.sepsis.org](http://www.sepsis.org) and connect with Sepsis Alliance on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn at @SepsisAlliance.



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