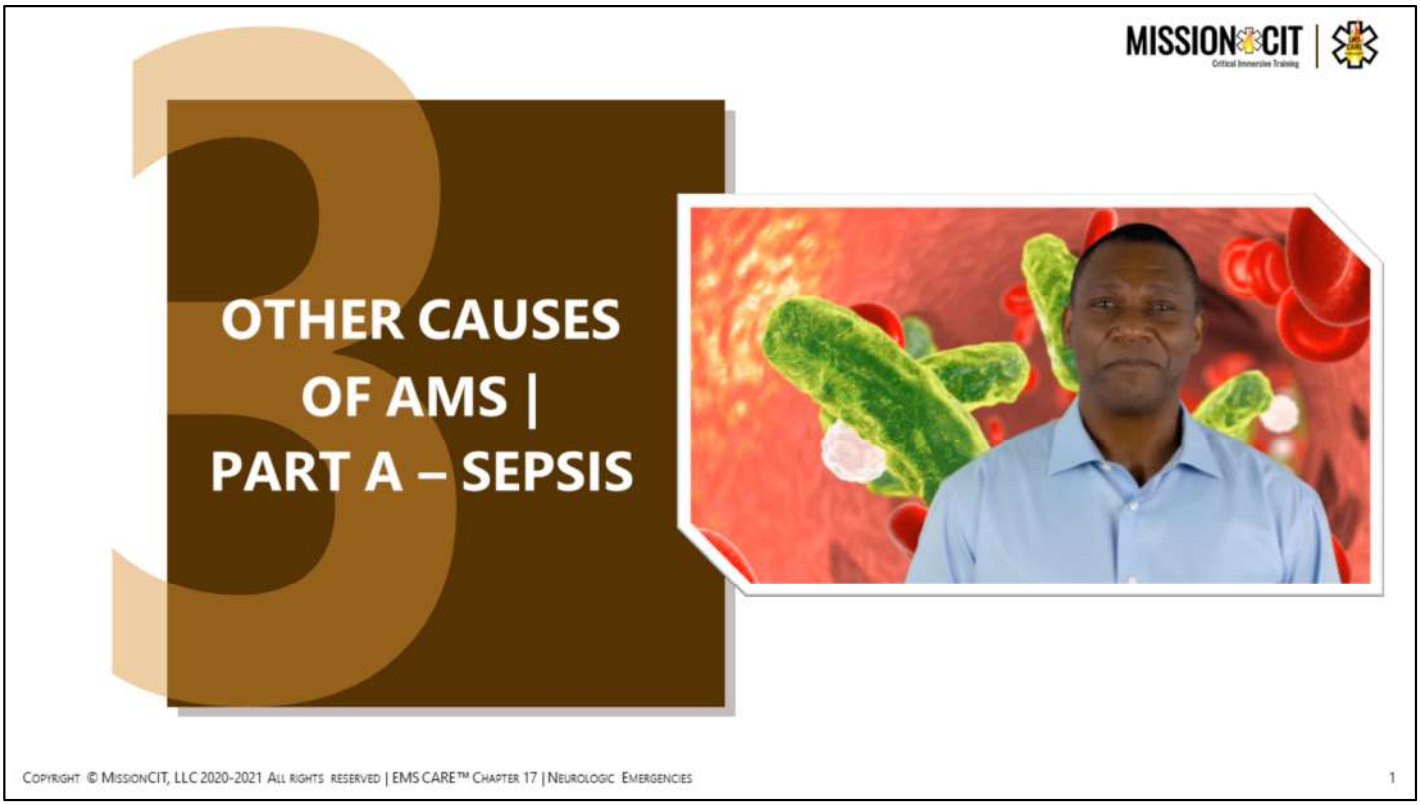



Well it's good to be back.

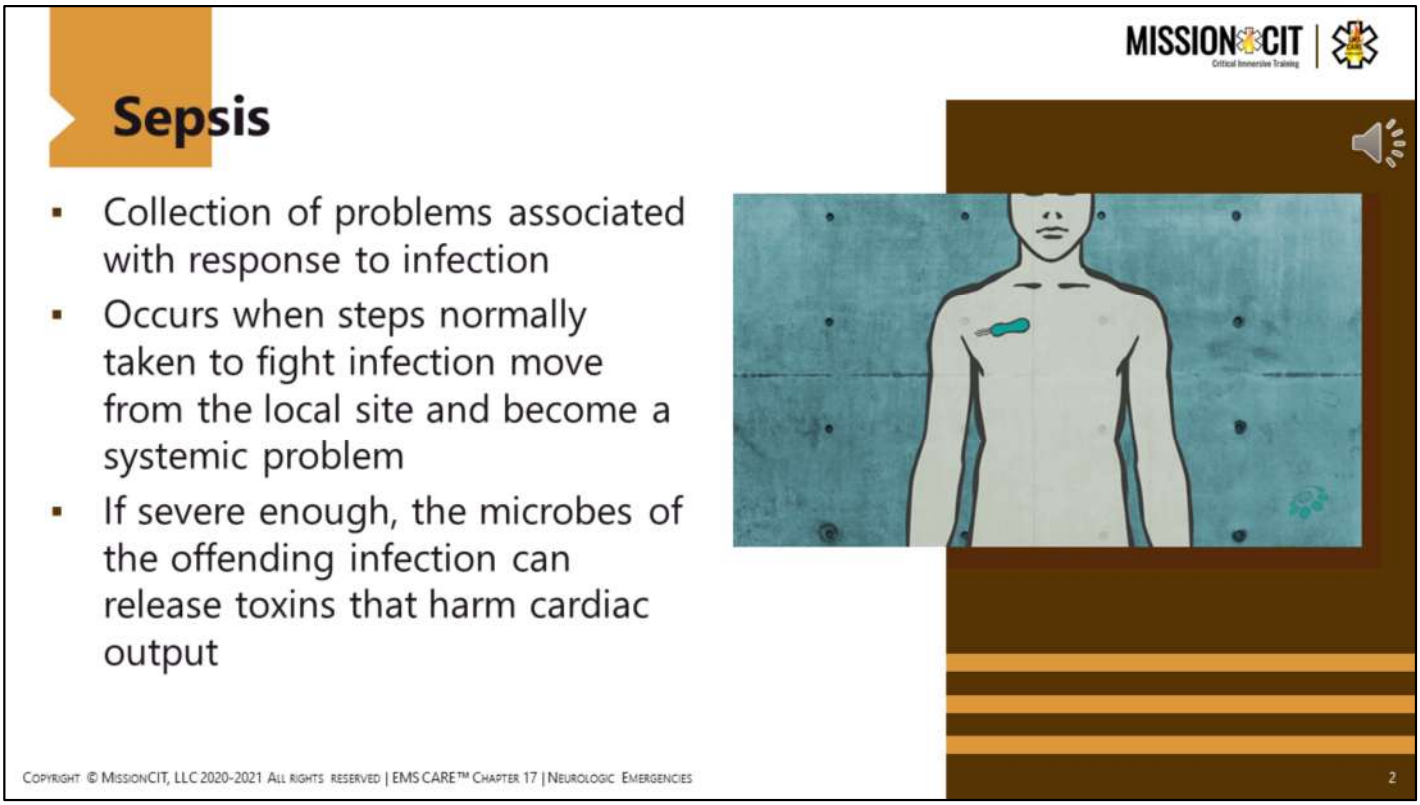
This lesson on Other Causes of Altered Mental Status (AMS) is really four separate subjects. With the common thread being that the patient may exhibit symptoms of AMS.

This first part is about Sepsis. The second part covers Seizure Disorders, including various types and classifications, causes, and patient assessment.

Next is an extensive session on Stroke and Transient Ischemic Attacks (TIA). There we will discuss symptoms, assessment, and patient care. Plus, there will be a short video at the end on TIA's.

And the fourth and final part of this lesson covers Dizziness, and Syncope or Fainting.

Good Studying.




Sepsis is a potentially life-threatening condition caused by the body's response to an infection. The body normally releases chemicals into the bloodstream to fight an infection. Sepsis occurs when the body's response to these chemicals is out of balance, triggering changes that can damage multiple organ systems. If severe enough, the microbes of the offending infection can release toxins that harm cardiac output.

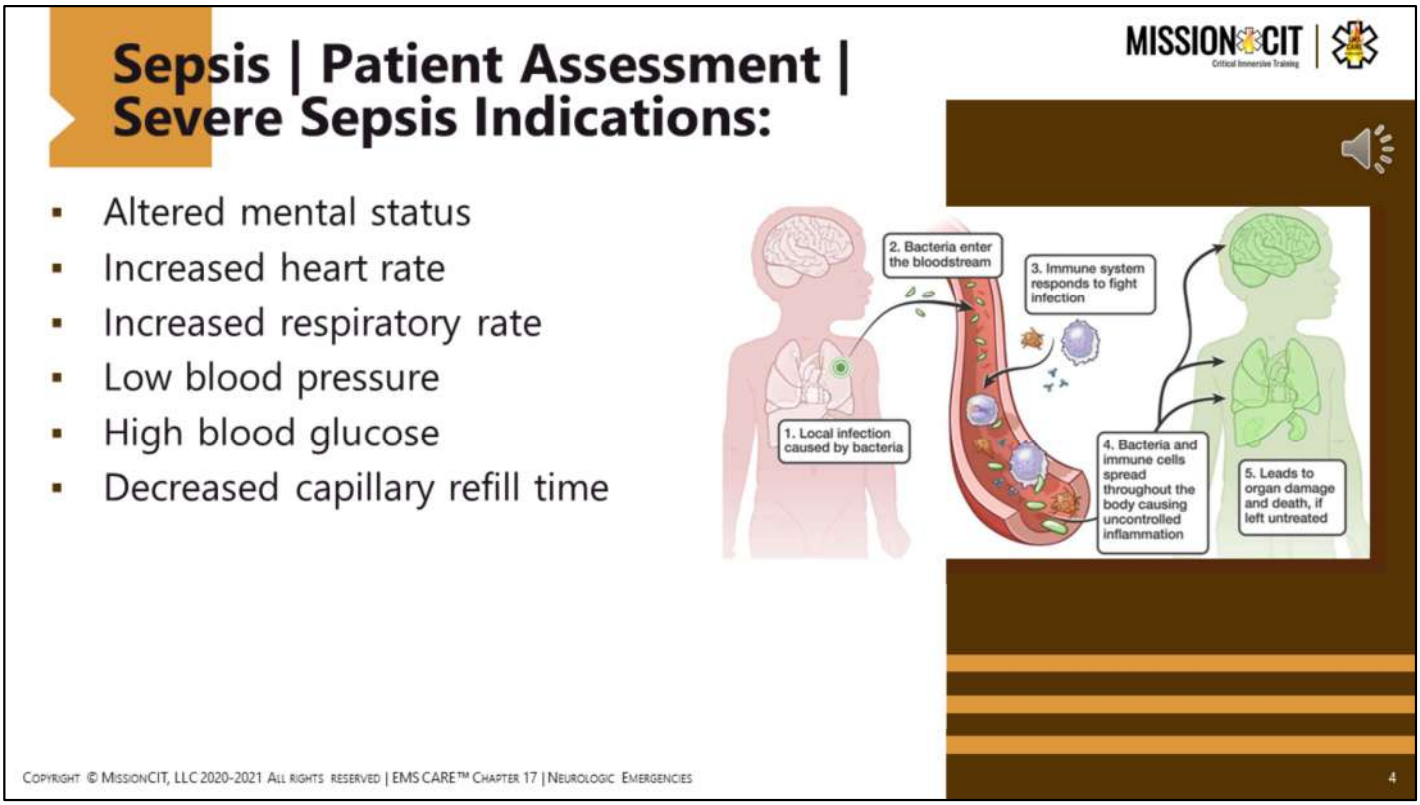
If sepsis progresses to septic shock, blood pressure drops dramatically. This may lead to death. Sepsis is caused by infection and can happen to anyone. Sepsis is most common and most dangerous in:

- Older adults,
- Pregnant women,
- Children younger than 1,
- People who have chronic conditions, such as diabetes, kidney or lung disease, or cancer; and
- People who have weakened immune systems.

Early treatment of sepsis, usually with antibiotics and large amounts of intravenous fluids, improves chances for survival.




Every year sepsis affects 30 million people worldwide, anyone with an infection can develop sepsis but some are more at risk than others. This short, animated WHO video provides key information on the risks associated with sepsis and how infections and their evolution to sepsis can be prevented in health care and the community, so that together we can help save millions of lives.




The following symptoms may indicate severe sepsis:

- Altered mental status,
- Increased heart rate,
- Increased respiratory rate,
- Low blood pressure,
- High blood glucose, and
- Decreased capillary refill time.

In addition, the patient may experience:

- Generalized body swelling,
- Reduced urine output,
- Fever and chills,
- A decrease in platelet count,
- Difficulty In breathing,

- Mental confusion, and
- Hyperventilation.

A number of medications are used to treat sepsis. The patient needs to be hospitalized. Mechanical ventilation may be required. The Medications may include:

- Antibiotics: These are administered intravenously; within the first 6 hours or earlier to the infection. Initially, the treatment starts with a broad-spectrum antibiotic to treat a variety of bacteria.
- Next are Vasopressors: If the blood pressure remains too low after receiving intravenous fluids, they may be treated with vasopressors that constrict blood vessels, and help increase the blood pressure.
- In addition, Steroids may be administered to reduce inflammation.

That's it for sepsis. I will be right back to discuss Seizure Disorders.