

### OVERVIEW

Effective September 1, 2026, Blue Cross will align with the [Third International Consensus Definitions for Sepsis and Septic Shock \(Sepsis-3\)](#) clinical criteria for the diagnosis and reporting of sepsis.

The Sepsis-3 criteria, published in the Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA) in 2016, provides updated definitions for sepsis and septic shock. Sepsis is now defined as “*life-threatening organ dysfunction caused by a dysregulated host response to infection.*” This is different from the previous Sepsis-2 criteria, which were based on the Systemic Inflammatory Response Syndrome (SIRS).

### KEY DIAGNOSTIC TOOLS

#### **SOFA (Sequential Organ Failure Assessment) score:**

The SOFA score is the primary tool to assess organ dysfunction in patients with suspected infection. An acute increase of 2 or more points from a patient's baseline SOFA score is indicative of sepsis. The full scoring system is detailed and often requires lab results. There are online calculators available to help with the assessment (see below).

The score assesses the function of six organ systems:

- Respiratory
- Coagulation
- Liver
- Cardiovascular
- Central Nervous System
- Renal

#### **qSOFA (quick SOFA) score:**

The qSOFA score is a simplified bedside screening tool to quickly identify patients with suspected infection who are at a higher risk of poor outcomes. A score of 2 or more suggests a higher likelihood of sepsis and the need for further investigation and use of the full SOFA score.

The qSOFA score is based on three clinical criteria:

1. Low blood pressure: Systolic blood pressure  $\leq$  100 mmHg
2. High respiratory rate:  $\geq$  22 breaths per minute
3. Altered mentation: Glasgow Coma Scale  $<$  15

### RESOURCES

#### **Primary publication:**

The foundational paper for the Sepsis-3 definitions is [The Third International Consensus Definitions for Sepsis and Septic Shock \(Sepsis-3\)](#) published in JAMA.

#### **Medical societies:**

The Sepsis-3 guidelines are endorsed by numerous medical societies, including the Society of Critical Care Medicine (SCCM) and the European Society of Intensive Care Medicine (ESICM).

#### **Clinical calculators:**

- [ClinCalc SOFA calculator](#)
- [Omni calculator SOFA score](#)
- [WikEM qSOFA information](#)