

# Sepsis

## Information for you and your relatives

Sepsis is a life threatening condition that arises when the body's response to infection injures its own tissues and organs.

This leaflet provides information about sepsis. Please ask your doctor if you have further queries about sepsis or require advice.

### Patient Information Leaflet

If you require a translation or an alternative format of this leaflet please call PALS on 01296 316042

Safe & compassionate care,

every time

## Going Home – What to expect

Once home you may still be very tired and need to rest. You may be much weaker than before. Pushing yourself too hard may delay progress. Set achievable goals and pace yourself.

Sepsis may take away your appetite. Try small meals and healthy snacks (such as fresh fruit or seeds and raisins) to build up your appetite and strength. Your emotions may be very changeable. This is a normal response to how ill you have been. Try talking to someone about your feelings.

After a life-changing experience your relationships with family may also have changed. You may feel they are over protective. Remember, they watched anxiously while you were ill. This may have affected them more than you realise.

Returning to work can be really daunting. Many employers allow patients to return part time, gradually increasing hours.

Remember, although recovery can be tough, there is every reason to be optimistic that with time you will get back to a more normal life.

## Further Information

You may wish to join the local Herts, Beds and Bucks Sepsis Support Group for further support. Tel: 0808 800 0029 or email: [support@sepsistrust.org](mailto:support@sepsistrust.org)

The UK Sepsis Trust also provides information on patients and relatives:

[www.sepsistrust.org](http://www.sepsistrust.org)

Tel: 0800 389 6255

[Info@sepsistrust.org](mailto:Info@sepsistrust.org)

## How can I help reduce healthcare associated infections?

Infection prevention and control is important to the well-being of our patients and for that reason we have infection control procedures in place. Keeping your hands clean is an effective way of preventing the spread of infections. We ask that you, and anyone visiting you, use the hand sanitiser available at the entrance to every ward before coming in to or after leaving the ward. In some situations hands may need to be washed at the sink using soap and water rather than using the hand sanitiser. Staff will let you know if this is the case.

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## What is Sepsis?

Sepsis is also known as septicaemia or blood poisoning. Sepsis occurs when the body over-responds to a bad infection leading to tissue damage. You may become very ill as a result.

Sepsis can happen quickly, which can be frightening for patients and relatives. The majority of patients recover with a course of antibiotics.

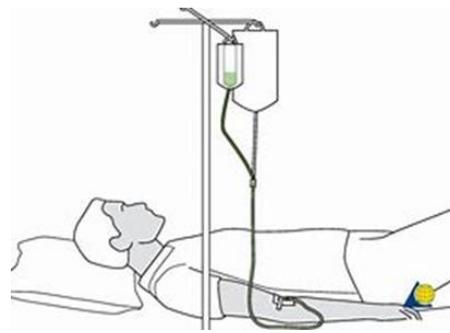
However, if the immune system is weak or an infection is particularly severe, it can cause problems to the body's organs and systems. This might include a very low blood pressure, kidney failure or difficulties breathing.

In very rare cases sepsis may need treatment on a critical care unit.

Recovery for everyone is different, and it may take some time for you to feel yourself again.

## How is sepsis treated?

Prompt treatment with antibiotics is the cornerstone of treatment.



Patients may require an intravenous drip to treat low blood pressure, or oxygen if oxygen levels are low.

Blood tests, and other tests like x-rays, are performed to establish the cause of the infection and its effect on the organs.

We also monitor how much urine is produced, which may require a catheter.

## What if I have to go to the critical care unit?

Critical care (also known as intensive care & ICU) is where patients are treated and nursed if they require additional support for their major organs, such as a breathing or kidney machine.

Patients may remember only bits of their time on critical care. This is completely normal.



Support post-critical care is available at:

[www.icusteps.org](http://www.icusteps.org)

0300 3020121

## What can relatives do to help?

Your family and friends have an important role in helping you to recover. Just being there with you, giving encouragement and reassurance, can help your recovery.

Often patients get confused when they have sepsis. Familiar things from home like photos, music or books may help.

Your visitors might want to brush your hair or help you take food and drinks. A hand or foot massage may help if they feel swollen or heavy.

**Visitors** – please remember to look after yourselves. We recommend you eat properly, take breaks, and rest when you can. It can be hard and very tiring to accompany someone you love through an illness.

The nurses and doctors are here to help. If you have questions or are unsure of anything, please ask.