

# Sepsis Discharge

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This leaflet is designed for adults who may be at high risk of serious infection or sepsis. It explains what sepsis is, how it's treated, and when to seek help.

Your medical team will talk to you about why you may be at higher risk of sepsis and what to do if you need help or advice. If you have not had that conversation, and have any questions after reading this leaflet, please speak to a healthcare professional.

## What is sepsis?

Sepsis happens when the body's immune system overreacts to an infection. It can be life threatening but early treatment can help stop sepsis becoming more serious. The infection can be caused by bacteria, viruses, or sometimes fungi.

Sepsis can occur following infections such as:

- Pneumonia
- Urinary tract infection
- Meningitis
- Abdominal infection
- Skin infection, wound, burn or bite
- Bone or joint infection

## Who can be at risk of having sepsis?

Anyone can get sepsis, but it's more likely if you:

- Are over 75 or frail
- Are under 1 year old
- Have a weakened immune system (e.g., diabetes)
- Are taking long-term steroids or immunosuppressant drugs
- Are being treated for cancer with chemotherapy
- Have recently had surgery, or other invasive procedures
- Have wounds or burns
- Are pregnant, or have recently given birth, had a miscarriage or termination

## What treatment have I have had?

You may have had many tests to find the source of the infection, these may include:

- Blood tests
- Urine or stool samples
- Throat, nose or skin swabs
- X-rays or scans
- Regular observations (e.g. blood pressure, temperature)

Based on the assessment and test results your treatment may have included:

- Antibiotics
- Intravenous fluids (a drip)
- Oxygen therapy

In some cases, surgery may have been required to remove the source of infection.

You may also have spent time in the Department of Critical Care for help with your breathing, or blood pressure.

## What happens after sepsis?

Most people who have had sepsis will get better completely. But everyone is different, so some people may get better quickly, and others may take longer or find it harder.

People who have had severe sepsis or problems caused by sepsis might have long-term effects. This is called Post Sepsis Syndrome. This is when someone still feels unwell after the infection is gone. It can last for several months or longer and may include:

- Feeling very tired all the time
- Difficulty concentrating or memory problems ('brain fog')
- Feeling anxious, low in mood or difficulty sleeping
- Pain in joints or muscles
- Skin changes, hair loss, brittle nails or teeth
- Poor appetite or taste changes
- In some cases, ongoing issues with organs such as the lungs or kidneys

If you need help caring for someone recovering from sepsis you can ask for this. Contact your local Adult Social Services team at the council. They can look at what support you might need.

You may also receive some help from the discharge team at the hospital.

## Will I get sepsis again?

Many people worry about getting sepsis again. After sepsis, your immune system can be weaker for up to a year. This means you're more likely to catch infections. But most infections can be treated easily if caught early.

To lower your risk:

- Don't ignore signs of infection (most infections can be treated easily if caught early)
- Practice good hygiene
- Stay away from people with colds, coughs, diarrhoea or vomiting
- Keep up to date with vaccinations

## What are the signs and symptoms of sepsis?

Look out for:

- Feeling very unwell or getting worse quickly
- Drowsiness, slurred speech, confusion or agitation
- Extreme shivering or muscle pain
- Not weeing or hardly weeing
- Feeling breathless
- A very fast heart rate
- Changes to skin colour/ lips or tongue, mottling, or a rash which does not go away when pressed on
- High temperature: above 38°C (or above 37.5°C if receiving chemotherapy)
- Low temperature: below 36°C

### **Just Ask: "Could it be sepsis?"**

If someone has any signs of sepsis ring the emergency contact numbers provided by your medical team, call 999, or go to the nearest A&E straight away.

The **UK Sepsis Trust** offers support to individuals and families who have been affected by sepsis, if you feel that you need support you can access this through:

Website - [sepsistrust.org/get-support/](https://sepsistrust.org/get-support/)

Call - **0808 800 0029** to speak to the Specialist Support Team.

