

Life after sepsis

Critical Care Patient Information Leaflet

Introduction

This leaflet is for people who have had sepsis. It gives information on what you can expect when you get home and what to look out for in the future.

What is sepsis and how it is caused?

Sepsis is a common and potentially life-threatening condition triggered by an infection. It is caused by the way the body reacts to germs such as bacteria entering the body. The infection may start in one part of the person's body or it may be widespread.

Sepsis can occur as a result of:

- various infections such as urine or chest infections
- skin injuries such as cuts and bites
- problems in the abdomen (tummy) such as a burst ulcer

In sepsis, the body's immune system goes into overdrive, setting off a series of reactions including widespread inflammation, swelling and blood clotting. This can lead to a major decrease in blood pressure, which can mean the blood supply to vital organs such as the brain, heart and kidneys is reduced.

What treatment is there?

If sepsis is recognised early, antibiotics and fluids can be given to treat it. This can stop the progression of sepsis and most people will make a full recovery with no lasting problems.

What happens after sepsis?

The majority of people who have suffered sepsis that is mild or uncomplicated will make a full recovery. However, some patients who have had severe sepsis may suffer with long term problems. These can have life-changing effects on you and your family. These effects can be physical or psychological.

Physical effects can include:

- Frequent infections
- Loss of appetite
- Dry skin
- Fatigue, tiredness
- Joint stiffness and/or pain
- Poor kidney function

Psychological effects may include:

- Anxiety and/or panic attacks
- Short term memory loss
- Poor concentration
- Insomnia (having problems sleeping)

What can I expect when I go home?

Going home after a serious illness can be very scary and frustrating for you and your family. Everyone is different and you will recover at your own pace.

Try not to push yourself too hard as this may delay your recovery. Listen to your body. If you become tired, stop and rest. You may feel more emotional than normal or low in mood. This is to be expected after a life-changing experience.

Can I work?

Only you will know how much you can cope with and if you are ready. Going back to work after an illness can be overwhelming. Speak to your employer. They may be able to start you back on reduced hours to break you in slowly. This will also help if you have outpatient appointments to attend at hospital.

Relationships

It will take time for you and your family to come to terms with what has happened to you. Remember, your relatives have been through this process with you. They have watched you anxiously while you were ill, observing all your treatment, oxygen, drips, tubes and machines.

Relationships can become strained as when you come home, your family may feel they are now responsible for looking after you and will want to do all they can to help. However if you feel smothered, it is important to explain how you feel and that you wish to be more independent.

What should I look out for in future?

- Very low or high temperature (fever)
- Fast heartbeat
- Rapid or shallow breathing
- Dizziness or you may feel faint
- Confusion

If you have two or more of these symptoms, it could be sepsis. Look out for other signs such as changes in your skin – is it mottled, pale or cold? Has it been a long time since you passed urine, or are you only passing tiny amounts?

If you think you may have sepsis, seek medical advice urgently. Sepsis is an emergency and it is crucial not to delay treatment.

Can I find out more?

You can find out more from the following website:

NHS Choices

<http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Blood-poisoning/Pages/Introduction.aspx>

If you have any questions, or you are worried when you leave hospital, please contact the ward you stayed on before you went home. You can do this by ringing the switchboard number **01384 456111** and asking to be put through to the ward.

This leaflet can be downloaded or printed from:

<http://dudleygroup.nhs.uk/patients-and-visitors/patient-information-leaflets/>

If you have any feedback on this patient information leaflet, please email patient.information@dgh.nhs.uk

This leaflet can be made available in large print, audio version and in other languages, please call 0800 073 0510.

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此宣传单可提供大字版本、音频版本和其它语言版本，请拨打电话：0800 073 0510。

Ulotka dostępna jest również w dużym druku, wersji audio lub w innym języku. W tym celu zadzwoń pod numer 0800 073 0510.

ਇਹ ਪਰਚਾ ਵੱਡੇ ਅੱਖਰਾਂ، ਬੋਲ ਕੇ ਰੀਕਾਰਡ ਕੀਤਾ ਹੋਇਆ ਅਤੇ ਦੂਸਰੀਆਂ ਭਾਸ਼ਾਵਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਵੀ ਪ੍ਰਾਪਤ ਹੋ ਸਕਦਾ ਹੈ, 0800 073 0510 ਤੇ ਫੋਨ ਕਰੋ ਜੀ।

Aceasta broșura poate fi pusă la dispoziție tipărită cu caractere mari, versiune audio sau în alte limbi, pentru acest lucru va rugăm sunați la 0800 073 0510.

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