

## What if I have to go to the Critical Care Unit?

Critical Care or Intensive Care Unit (ICU) is where the most unwell patients in a hospital are treated and nursed.

You will be carefully monitored so that staff can quickly change your treatment if needed. This might include support for your major organs, such as help with your breathing or kidneys.

Your relatives will be supported by the ICU staff and may be asked to start a diary to help you to remember this time.

Support post-critical care is available at:  
[www.icusteps.org](http://www.icusteps.org)  
(24 hr answerphone: 0300 3020121)

## Going home – what to expect

Once home you may be very tired and will need to rest and sleep. You may be much weaker than before, but remember, pushing yourself too hard may delay your progress. Set achievable goals and pace yourself.

Sepsis may take away your appetite. Try having small meals and healthy snacks to gradually improve your appetite.

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 your family members may also have changed. You may feel they are being over protective. Do remember they watched anxiously while you were ill. This may have affected them more than you realise.

Returning to work can be daunting, many employers allow staff to return on reduced hours.

Remember, recovery can be tough, but you can be optimistic that with time you will get back to a more normal life.

The UK Sepsis Trust can be contacted if you have queries about recovering after sepsis or should you need some advice. There may also be a support group in your area.

[www.sepsistrust.org](http://www.sepsistrust.org)  
Phone: 0800 3896255

**This information sheet is available to order in other languages and formats. If you would like a copy, please contact us on 01793 604031 or email [gwh.pals@nhs.net](mailto:gwh.pals@nhs.net)**

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## What is Sepsis?

Sepsis is a life threatening condition, caused by your body's response to an infection. This leaflet provides information about sepsis; please ask your health care professional if you have further questions.



## What is sepsis?

### What is sepsis?

Previously sepsis was known as septicaemia or blood poisoning. It occurs when your body overreacts to an infection, leading to organ damage; you may become very ill as a result.

Sepsis can happen quickly, which can be frightening for patients and their relatives, though 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 other parts of your body. This might include a very low blood pressure, difficulty breathing, or kidney failure.

Some people develop sepsis so severe that it may be life threatening, and treatment may be needed on a critical care unit.

### How is sepsis treated?

Treatment for sepsis, should you choose to have it, is relatively simple and alongside early recognition, can be lifesaving.

**Antibiotics** - to treat the infection a “broad-spectrum” antibiotic injection may be used, designed to work against a wide range of infections.

**Fluids** - through an intravenous line (a drip) to maintain blood pressure and keep you hydrated.

**Oxygen** - maybe needed via nasal prongs or a face mask.

**Blood samples** - taken to check on your kidney function, infection markers, and blood clotting.

**Blood cultures** - to look for infection in your blood.

**Measuring your urine output.**

### What can my visitors do to help?

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

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

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

Visitors—please remember to look after yourselves. Eat properly, take breaks, and rest when you can. It can be hard and tiring to support 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.