

Recovering at Home After Sepsis: *What Survivors Need to Know*

What is sepsis? Sepsis is a complication caused by the body's overwhelming and life-threatening response to an infection, which can lead to tissue damage, organ failure, and death.

How will I feel when I get home?^{1,2}



You have been seriously ill, and your body and mind need time to get better. You may experience the following physical symptoms upon returning home:

- Weakness and fatigue
- Breathlessness
- Body pains or aches
- Difficulty moving around
- Difficulty sleeping
- Weight loss, lack of appetite, food not tasting normal
- Dry and itchy skin
- Brittle nails and hair
- Unsure of yourself
- Not caring about your appearance
- Wanting to be alone, avoiding friends and family
- Flashbacks, bad memories
- Confusing reality (e.g., not sure what is real and what is not)
- Feeling anxious, more worried than usual
- Poor concentration
- Depressed, angry, unmotivated
- Frustration at not being able to do everyday tasks

Recovery steps



After you have had sepsis, rehabilitation usually starts in the hospital. The purpose of rehabilitation is to restore you back to your previous level of health or as close to it as possible. Begin your rehabilitation by building up your activities slowly, and rest when you are tired.

- Follow the treatment plan your healthcare provider prescribes.
- Set small, achievable goals for yourself each week.
- Follow activity restrictions, such as not driving or operating machinery, as recommended by your healthcare provider or pharmacist, especially if you are taking pain medicines.
- Rest and rebuild your strength. Try to get at least 7 to 9 hours of sleep each night.
- Eat a healthy diet.
- Drink enough fluids to keep your urine light yellow in color, unless you are told to limit fluids.
- Make a list of questions to ask your doctor when you go for a checkup.

Appointments



- Keep follow-up appointments, including those for routine testing.
- Talk with your provider about any questions or fears you have.

Measures to reduce the risk of infections and sepsis



- Vaccinate against preventable infections, such as flu, pneumonia, respiratory syncytial virus (RSV), meningitis, or measles.
- Be aware of the early symptoms of sepsis and do not hesitate to call an ambulance—early treatment saves lives.
- Have a healthy lifestyle and practice good hygiene measures.
- Regularly and thoroughly wash hands with soap (e.g., after using the toilet, after cleaning your nose, after contact with animals or raw meat).
- Pay attention to insect bites and skin injuries.

Contact your doctor if you have the following symptoms



- Fever
- Shivering or very cold
- Pale or discolored skin
- Pain and body aches that are worse than normal
- Nausea or vomiting
- Fast or skipping heartbeat
- Dizziness when standing up or fainting
- Sleepy, hard to wake up
- New onset or more confusion
- Shortness of breath
- Redness, swelling, pain, warmth, or drainage of pus from any wounds or intravenous (IV) site
- Anxiety

References:

1. Sepsis Alliance. Post-Sepsis Syndrome—PSS. Available at: www.sepsis.org/sepsis-basics/post-sepsis-syndrome. Accessed on: September 23, 2026.
2. Centers for Disease Control and Infection Prevention. Managing Recovery from Sepsis. Available at www.cdc.gov/sepsis/living-with/index.html. Accessed on September 23, 2026.

HSAG is the West Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) Quality Innovation Network-Quality Improvement Organization (QIN-QIO) Region 7.

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Publication No. QN-13SOW-XC-09222026-05