



# RECOVERY AFTER SEPSIS



(Severe Infection)



Information for patients, families, and caregivers.



## Were you recently in the hospital with a severe infection that led to organ failure?

This is called **SEPSIS**. Sepsis occurs when the immune system overreacts to infection. It affects the whole body.

## You are a sepsis survivor

Recovery from sepsis can continue after you leave the hospital. **Post-Sepsis Syndrome** is the name for the physical, mental, and emotional challenges that can occur during recovery. It may also be called Post-Critical Illness or Post-ICU Syndrome.



## WHEN SHOULD I SEEK CARE?

Your body needs time to heal even after you return home. During this period, you have a higher risk of re-infection. Watch for signs of infection. If you or your loved ones are concerned, seek care. Don't delay!

**Seek care when any new symptoms arise.** Your care provider can assess and rule out other causes. They may refer you to a specialist to help manage specific physical, mental, or emotional symptoms. It may be helpful to bring this pamphlet to your appointments.

## After leaving the hospital, you may experience:

### Physical

- Trouble sleeping
- Problems with coordination or balance
- Difficulty walking
- Headaches
- Feeling unusually tired, even after sleeping
- Problems eating or swallowing
- Muscle weakness or inability to move parts of the body
- Shortness of breath
- Dizziness
- Visual or speech disorders
- Painful and stiff joints and muscles
- Hair, skin, and nail issues such as hair loss and rashes
- Nerve pain or numbness
- Toothaches or pain when eating or drinking certain foods



### Mental & Emotional

- Problems with thinking, memory, or concentration
- Nightmares or flashbacks
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Changes in mood, behaviour, and personality



Let's talk recovery, on the other side...

# HOW DO I REDUCE MY RISK OF ANOTHER SEVERE INFECTION?

## Everyday actions you can take to lower the risk of infection:

- Get vaccinated against preventable infections. This includes getting a flu shot every year.
- Respect basic hygiene measures. Wash hands often and well with soap for 20 seconds.
- Watch insect bites, cuts, scrapes and burns for signs of an infection.
- Follow instructions for wound care.

## EARLY RECOVERY

### "How can I best support my recovery?"

After you leave the hospital, you may depend on help from family, friends, or support services. If possible, have a plan in place before you go home. If you have concerns about self-care, ask about support services near your home.

Your daily routine may change. Work with your care team. Set and celebrate small goals each day. If you did not meet these goals, don't be discouraged. Set new goals you may be more likely to achieve. It may take time to feel better.

## ONGOING RECOVERY

### Tell your family and friends what you're experiencing.

Explain how you feel. Offer them information to help understand what you're going through. It will help you all move through this time of change. Your family and loved ones may also find this time difficult. They should get support as well.

## Physical Recovery

- Do any exercises from physiotherapists and other doctors or nurses.
- Rest when you feel tired.
- Seek help as needed.
- Use a walker or other mobility aids to help you move if you need to.
- Ask your care provider for a test to help determine which foods will help your recovery. Eating small meals often may help.

## Mental and Emotional Recovery

- Ask your care provider about tests for anxiety, depression, or Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).
- Sepsis recovery can affect your sexual performance or drive. Talk to your care provider if you're concerned.
- **Be kind to yourself.** Putting pressure on yourself to recover faster can cause harm. You and your body are doing your best.

## RESOURCES

Access online peer-to-peer support for sepsis survivors at the Canadian Sepsis Foundation's Facebook page.

For more information on sepsis and post-sepsis care, visit:

- Health Quality BC, [healthqualitybc.ca/improve-care/sepsis/](http://healthqualitybc.ca/improve-care/sepsis/)
- UK Sepsis Trust, [sepsistrust.org](http://sepsistrust.org)

## LOCAL RESOURCES

Help us improve! Scan the QR code or use the link to share your feedback.



[shorturl.at/ArVRm](https://shorturl.at/ArVRm)

This project was led by the Patient Advisory Council of Action on Sepsis at the University of British Columbia.