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## **Sepsis - Information for you and your relatives**

Sepsis is a life threatening condition that arises when the body's response to infection injures its own tissues and organs.

This leaflet provides information about sepsis. Please ask your doctor if you have further queries about sepsis or require advice.

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### **Further information**

For further support you may wish to join the local Oxfordshire & Berkshire Sepsis Support Group. For more information please contact 0800 389 6255 or [info@sepsistrust.org](mailto:info@sepsistrust.org)

The UK Sepsis Trust also provides information for patients and relatives.

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[www.sepsistrust.org](http://www.sepsistrust.org)  
Tel:0800 389 6255  
[info@sepsistrust.org](mailto:info@sepsistrust.org)

## **What is Sepsis?**

Sepsis is also known as septicaemia or blood poisoning. Sepsis occurs when the body over-responds to a bad infection leading to tissue damage. You may become very ill as a result.

Sepsis can happen quickly, which can be frightening for patients and relatives.

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 the body's organ systems. This might include a very low blood pressure, problems breathing, or kidney failure.

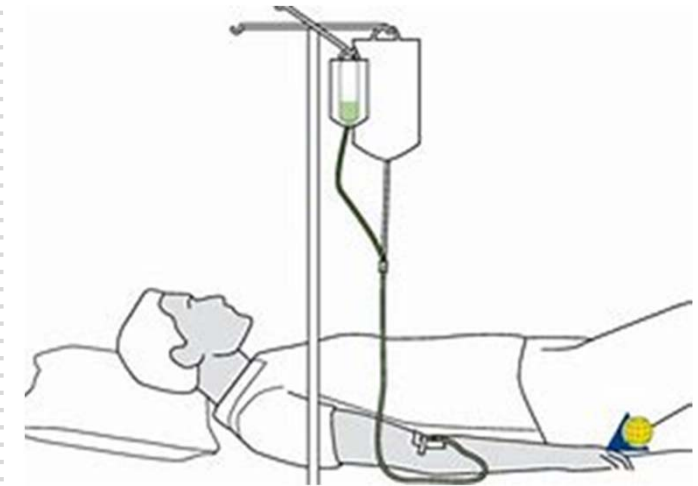
Some people develop sepsis so severe that it may be life threatening, and treatment on a critical care unit may be required.

Fortunately, most patients recover, although recovery for everyone is different, and it may take some time for you to feel yourself again.

## **How is sepsis treated**

Treatment for sepsis is relatively simple and alongside early recognition can be life saving.

**Prompt treatment with antibiotics is the cornerstone of treatment.**



You may require a drip to treat low blood pressure, or oxygen if oxygen levels are low.

Blood tests, and other tests like x-rays, are done to look for the cause of the infection and its effect on the organs.

We also monitor how much urine you produce. This may require you to have a catheter.

## What if I have to go to the critical care unit?

Critical care (also known as intensive care) is where patients are treated and nursed if they require additional support for their major organs, such as a breathing or kidney machine. This requires even closer monitoring.

Patients may remember only bits of their time on critical care. It can be helpful for you or your relatives to keep a diary to help you and them through this time.



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

## What can relatives 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 your recovery.



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



Your visitors might want to brush your hair or help you 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 very tiring to accompany 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.

## Going Home – What to expect

Once home you may still be very tired and need to rest. You may be much weaker than before. Pushing yourself too hard may delay progress. Set achievable goals and pace yourself.

Sepsis may take away your appetite. Try small meals and healthy snacks to build up your appetite and strength.

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 family may also have changed. You may feel they are over protective. Remember, they watched anxiously while you were ill. This may have affected them more than you realise.

Returning to work can be really daunting. Many employers allow patients to start back part time.

Remember, although recovery can be tough, there is every reason to be optimistic that with time you will get back to a more normal life.