

Sepsis

Patient Education Guide



Introduction

You are getting this information because you or your loved one are being treated for or have recently been treated for sepsis. This book will give you information about how to best care for yourself and signs to watch for that you need to go back to the hospital.

It is important to follow all directions from your doctor and information in this book to take care of yourself.

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Questions/Notes

Use this page to write down any questions you have for your care team or take notes.

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Sepsis Action Plan

Your Plan for Action

- Use this guide to help you tell your doctor or nurse about changes in your symptoms.
- You are less likely to have to go to the hospital for treatment when you notice your symptoms early and take action.

You are in control and doing well.



You feel like your usual self:

- You do not have fever or chills
- You do not have shortness of breath
- You have your usual energy level
- You are thinking clearly with no confusion

Take action today. Call your doctor now.



- You have a temperature more than 101°F or less than 96.8°F
- You are shivering or feel very cold
- Your heart feels like its beating faster than normal
- You feel short of breath
- You feel very tired and it is hard to do daily activities
- You have not urinated for 5 or more hours, or when you do urinate it burns, is cloudy, or smells bad
- Your wound or IV site is painful, red, smells, or has pus

Take action now! Call 9-1-1 right away!



- It is hard to wake up and you cannot do any daily activities
- You are confused
- You are breathing very fast
- Your skin is pale or a different color
- You have very bad pain
- You feel like you might die

If you go to the hospital or call 911, make sure to tell them that you are concerned about sepsis.

What is sepsis?

Sepsis is a life-threatening reaction to an infection. It can cause harm to your body, cause organs to fail, and even lead to death. You need to be cared for in a hospital right away.

What causes sepsis?

Sepsis is caused by an infection. The infection can be caused by a virus, bacteria, fungus, or parasite. A long-term or a sudden illness can cause sepsis. An injury or a reaction to surgery can also cause it.

What are the risk factors?

Sepsis can happen in people of any age. You are more likely to have sepsis if you:

- Have a weak disease fighting system (immune system).
- Are 65 years of age or older.
- Had surgery or have been in the hospital.
- Have a device in your body like:
 - A catheter (small, thin tube)
 - IV (intravenous) line
 - Breathing tube
 - Drainage tube
- Are not getting enough nutrients from food (malnourished)
- Have a long-term disease like cancer, lung disease, kidney disease, or diabetes

What are the symptoms?

Symptoms of sepsis can include:

- Fever of 101°F or higher
- A temperature below 96.8°F
- Chills or feeling very cold
- Confusion or anxiety
- Fatigue
- Muscle aches
- Shortness of breath
- Nausea and vomiting
- Urinating much less than normal
- Fast heart rate (tachycardia)
- Fast breathing
- Changes in skin color (blotchy, pale, blue)
- Cool, clammy, or sweaty skin
- Skin rash

How is sepsis treated?

Sepsis must be treated in the hospital at first and you may need more than 1 type of treatment. Treatment is based on your symptoms and cause of sepsis. Your doctor will work with you to figure out the best treatment for you.

How can I prevent sepsis?

Sepsis cannot always be prevented. You can take steps to help prevent or treat infections quickly.

- Wash your hands often. Try to avoid colds and flu.
- Get your flu vaccine and other vaccines on time.
- Clean any wounds or scrapes well.
- Do not smoke or use tobacco products.
- Get medical help if you think you have an infection.

Care For Yourself

When you go home from the hospital, you will have several things to watch for and do to help your body heal from sepsis. It is very important you follow these directions and any other directions from your doctor.

Follow-Up Appointments

It is very important that you go to all follow-up appointments after you go home from the hospital. Write down what follow-up appointments you have so you do not forget, or view them in MyChart.

Date	Time	Who	Where

Medicine

- Take all over the counter and prescription medicines as told by your doctor.
- If taking an antibiotic, antiviral, or antifungal medicine, **finish all of the medicine even if you feel better.**
 - If you stop the medicine early, you are at a higher risk that sepsis will come back and can be worse.

Keep track of the medicines, especially antibiotics, your doctor prescribed below, so you do not miss a dose.

Medicine Name	Date Started	Amount	When to Take	Reason for Taking	Doctor

Life After Sepsis

Many people who have sepsis eventually have a full recovery. Some people may be at risk for long-term symptoms. It takes time for your mind and body to heal from sepsis. **Call your doctor if you have questions or concerns at any time.**

What is Post Sepsis Syndrome (PSS)?

PSS is a group of symptoms that affects some people who have had severe sepsis or septic shock. You may not notice these symptoms until after you go home from the hospital. **Most often these symptoms get better over time.** This is why it is very important to go to all of your follow-up appointments and talk to your doctor if you have a concern or question.

Symptoms

These symptoms are often normal, but it is important to talk to your doctor if you have them.

- Feel weak
- Fatigue
- Feel out of breath
- Body aches and pains
- Trouble moving
- Trouble sleeping
- Weight loss, lack of appetite
- Dry, itchy, peeling skin
- Brittle nails
- Feel unsure of yourself
- Want to be alone
- Nightmares or flashbacks
- Trouble concentrating
- Feel depressed or angry

How can I recover?

Take your time and rest as you recover. There are many resources available to you if you are having a hard time coping with recovery. Talk to your doctor about resources that could help you.

Tips for Recovery

Some things that might help you recover at home are:

- Set small goals each week, such as walking up the stairs or taking a bath.
- Rest as you need and let your body rebuild strength.
- Talk to family and friends about your feelings.
- Write your thoughts, feelings, and progress in a journal.
- Focus on a healthful eating plan.
- Exercise as you are able.
- Make a list of questions and concerns to take with you to your follow-up appointments.

Resources

For more information on sepsis and recovery, visit:



Sepsis Alliance
sepsis.org

To scan the QR code:

1. Open the camera on your smartphone.
2. Place the QR directly in the center of the camera and the link should appear on the screen.
3. Click this link to go to the webpage.



Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
[cdc.gov/sepsis/pdfs/Consumer fact-sheet protect-yourself-and-your-family-P.pdf](https://cdc.gov/sepsis/pdfs/Consumer_fact-sheet_protect-yourself-and-your-family-P.pdf)

Lifestyle Changes and Recovery

Below are some changes to consider as you recover to continue to live a healthful life.

Stop Smoking and Tobacco Use

Make a plan to stop using tobacco. This includes cigarettes, vapes, e-cigarettes, cigars, pipe smoking, hookah, chewing tobacco, and more. Henry Ford Health can help you quit.

- Call (888) 427-7587 for Metro Detroit Area
- Call (517) 205-7444 if you live in or near Jackson
- Visit henryford.com/tobaccofree
- Email TobaccoFree@hfhs.org



Pain Relief

Decrease Opioid/Narcotic Use

- If you take an opioid (also known as narcotic) pain medicine, it is strongly recommended you slowly reduce your use of it.
- Many patients rely on opioid pain medicine to get by. Reducing your use will make it easier and safer to control your pain after you go home from the hospital.
- Talk to the doctor that will be or currently prescribes your opioid pain medicine about ways you can reduce doses.

Non-Medicine Pain Relief

There are many ways to reduce pain without the use of medicine, like:

- Short frequent walks
- Relaxation/deep breathing techniques
- Ice Packs
- Prayer
- Humor
- Activities like TV, books, music, visiting with people

Prevent Blood Clots

Ways to prevent clots include physical activity, walking as soon as possible, ankle exercises, leg compression devices, blood thinner medicine, and drinking enough water.

- Sequential Compression Devices (SCDs) and special compression stockings
 - SCDs are special booties that compress the veins in your lower legs to move the blood back to your heart. This prevents pooling and clotting of the blood in your legs.
 - These are only meant to be worn during your hospital stay while you are in bed.
 - You may also be asked to wear special compression stockings to help with blood flow and to prevent blood clots.
- Blood Thinning Medicine
 - You may get a blood thinner medicine.

Symptoms of a Blood Clot

You need medical treatment right away for a blood clot. Tell your health care team if you have:

- Calf pain
- Calf warmth
- Calf redness
- Lung complications (like shortness of breath)
- Heart complications (such as palpitations)
- Chest pain

Healthful Eating

- Try to eat a variety of whole foods like vegetables, fruits, whole grains, legumes, lean protein-rich foods, and dairy or soy products with calcium and vitamin D.
- Try to limit food and drink with a lot of sodium, saturated fat, and added sugars.
- Try to drink 8 to 10 cups of water every day, unless your doctor tells you different.
- It is important to eat enough during recovery to meet your energy and recovery needs.
 - Try to get enough calories from the variety of food sources listed above.
 - You may need to try nutrition supplements to help with your recovery. Talk to your doctor to find out if this is right for you.
- If you need to lose weight, wait until you have fully recovered. Work with your primary care doctor to find a program that works for you.
- To help prevent constipation, eat foods high in fiber like vegetables, fruits, whole grains, beans, and legumes.

Questions/Notes

Write down any questions you have for your care team or take notes.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are approximately 20 lines visible. The paper has a slight shadow on the right side, suggesting it's resting on a surface. There is no handwriting or other markings on the paper.

Contact Information

Your primary care physician (PCP) is an important part of your care team. They may be able to help you with questions or home care needs after you go home from the hospital.

PCP Name: _____

PCP Phone Number: _____

- Once you are home from the hospital, you may get a phone call from a care team member to check on how you are doing.
- Other resources that might be helpful as you recover are listed below.

Department	Contact	Description
Hospital Operator	(313) 916-2600	Can help with questions about your hospital stay.
MyCare Advice Line	(844) 262-1949	Non-emergency medical advice from a registered nurse at no charge (your PCP must be Henry Ford doctor).
Appointment Scheduling	(800) 436-7936 or go to MyChart	Schedule an appointment with your PCP, ask your PCPC a question, request prescription renewals, and more.
MyChart	(800) 436-7936 henryford.com/MyChart	Online portal to manage your health care needs. Message doctors, view test results, renew prescriptions, request appointments, and more.
Outpatient Pharmacy	(313) 916-1231	Can help with questions about medicines you were prescribed during your hospital stay.
Billing	(800) 999-5829	For questions about your medical bills.
Medical Records	(313) 916-4540	To get copies of your medical records or images during your hospital stay.
National Crisis Line	(800) 273-8255	If you or your family member is having a hard time dealing with stress or anxiety.

