



**Health Quality &
Safety Commission**
Te Tāhū Hauora



Sepsis
Trust NZ



Recovering from sepsis

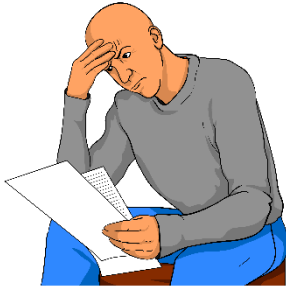


Published: August 2026



**New Zealand
Government**
Te Kāwanatanga
o Aotearoa

Before you start



Some of the information in this document may make people:

- upset
- worried.

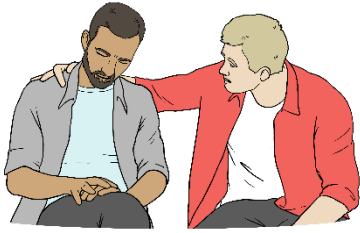


This information is not meant to scare anyone.

This information does not mean the things in this document will happen to:



- you
- people you know.



If you are worried you can talk to your:

- whānau / family
- friends
- doctor.



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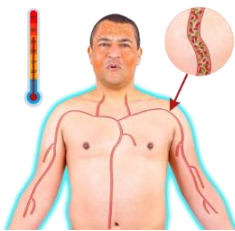


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About this Easy Read



This Easy Read is about what happens after you have had **sepsis**.



Sepsis can happen when your body reacts to an **infection**.



An **infection** is when you get sick from germs getting into your body.



Some infections that can lead to sepsis are:

- chest infections like pneumonia
- urine infections / UTIs
- skin infections or infected cuts / wounds.



Post Sepsis Syndrome / PSS

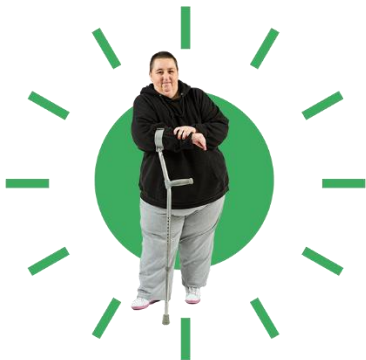
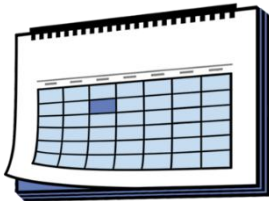


Around half of all **sepsis survivors** will be all better in a few:

- weeks

or

- months.



Sepsis survivors in this Easy Read means people who have lived after having sepsis.



Some of the sepsis survivors will experience something called **Post Sepsis Syndrome / PSS**.



Post Sepsis Syndrome / PSS is the name for any problems that last a long time caused by things like:

- having had sepsis
- the infection that caused the sepsis
- the treatment for the sepsis.

Post Sepsis Syndrome / PSS will be called **PSS** in this Easy Read.



PSS causes changes to:

- your ability to think
- how your body works.



PSS can also cause:

- health problems
- **mental health challenges.**



Mental health challenges are when you are having a hard time with your mental health.



PSS **symptoms** can be different for each person.



Symptoms are things that happen to show you are sick like:

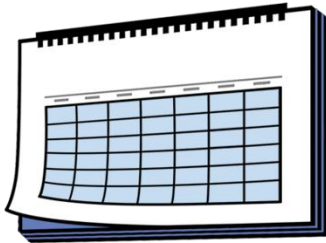
- feeling hot / cold
- coughing
- feeling sad all the time.





PSS might cause you to:

- have new medical conditions that last a long time
- find health conditions you had before the sepsis get worse.



It may take up to 2 years to recover from PSS.



You can get PSS even if you did not spend time in the **Intensive Care Unit / ICU**.



Intensive Care Units / ICUs are places where hospitals send people who:

- are at risk of dying
- need treatment that cannot be done anywhere else in the hospital
- need access to a nurse all the time
- need specially trained medical staff like doctors who know a lot about sepsis.

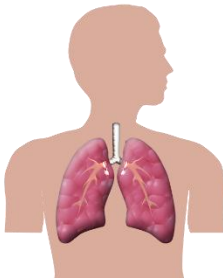


You might notice the PSS symptoms after you get home from the hospital.



You might also notice some changes while you are recovering from sepsis like:

- feeling very weak
- tiredness
- feeling like you do not have enough breath
- losing weight
- not feeling like eating
- food tasting different
- losing your hair
- nails breaking easily
- teeth breaking easily.

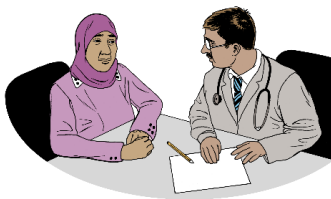




Other changes you might notice while you are recovering from sepsis are:

- skin that is:
 - dry
 - itchy
 - flaking
- feeling dizzy
- headaches
- changes in your vision / what you see
- you notice the temperature a lot more like:
 - feeling hot easily
 - feeling cold easily.





Other changes you might notice while you are recovering from sepsis are:

- things around you bothering you more like:
 - noise
 - bright lights
 - busy places
- you get infections more often.

You should talk to your doctor / nurse about PSS if any of these symptoms:

- keep happening
- get worse.



You might also experience different feelings when you get home like:

- mood swings / your mood changing quickly
- not caring about how you look
- wanting to be alone
- staying away from loved ones
- feeling like you do not want to do anything
- not believing in yourself
- frustration that you are not back to how you usually are yet
- guilt
- stress
- feeling like nobody understands how you feel.





You might also experience things like:

- remembering bad memories
- feeling bad feelings that are to do with bad memories
- having a hard time working out what is real
- not being able to focus on things like reading
- having trouble remembering things
- having trouble thinking
- **anxiety**
- **depression.**

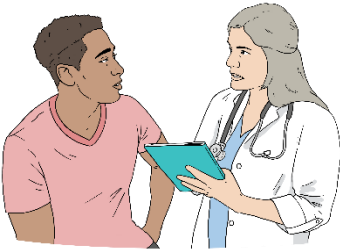




Here **anxiety** means feeling very worried for a long time.



Here **depression** means feeling very sad for a long time.



You should talk to your doctor / nurse about PSS if any of these symptoms:

- keep happening
- get worse.

Sepsis and mental health



People who survive sepsis have been known to develop mental health conditions like:

- anxiety
- depression.



If someone is struggling with their mental health it is important that they see a nurse or doctor.

Recovering at home



It is important to understand sepsis.

This is so you can understand that **recovery** from sepsis can be hard.



Here **recovery** means getting better once you do not have sepsis anymore.



Recovery from sepsis can be harder than recovering from something like surgery.



Recovery can:

- be different for everyone
- take longer than you think.



Some people might keep having problems after they have recovered.



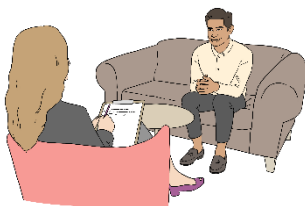
If you are worried about your recovery talk to your:

- doctor
- nurse.



They might be able to find you the support you need from other health care providers like:

- physiotherapists
- counsellors.





Some sepsis survivors might want different kinds of:

- therapy
- support.



This could be through people like:

- rongoa Māori / Māori medicine practitioners
- religious leaders like priests
- cultural leaders like kaumātua.



Sharing this information with them might give them ideas for the best ways to support you.



Sometimes recovery happens slowly.

This can make it hard to see that you are getting better.



One thing you can do is keep a journal about something you do each week that supports you to get better.



For example if you are having a hard time concentrating you could do a word puzzle each week.

After you have done the word puzzle write how doing the puzzle was like:

- was it easier than last week?
- can you concentrate / work on it for longer?





As you write more in the journal you will see if you:

- are doing better
- need more support because you are not doing better.



Caring for a sepsis survivor



A loved one having sepsis can affect:

- everyone at home
- the whole whānau / family.



When you need to care for a sepsis survivor at home you might feel:

- happy they are out of hospital
- worried about caring for them.



Often people closest to a sepsis survivor feel a lot of different things.



Children who know the sepsis survivor well may also get upset.



People close to a sepsis survivor might feel things like:

- being upset
- feeling like crying a lot
- being anxious
- being depressed
- being tired.



It is important to take care of yourself too.



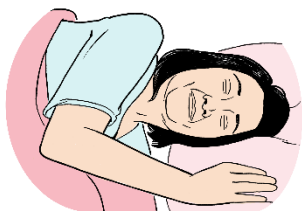
To take care of yourself you can do things like:

- take time to do things you like
- talk about how you are feeling with someone else.



To take care of yourself you can also do things like:

- eat well
- get enough sleep
- ask for support if you need it.



It is important to ask for support if:

- you are having a hard time
- your family is having a hard time.



You can ask for support from your family doctor.



The next part of this Easy Read has other groups you can ask for support from.

Other supports



There are different groups that can support you when dealing with sepsis.

If you are worried about health

Call **111** if you:

- are worried about someone with sepsis / who has had sepsis
- think that someone might have sepsis.





111:

- can be called at any time
- does not cost any money to phone.



Taking an ambulance to the hospital might cost you money.



If you need to talk to someone now

These next 2 places:

- can be contacted at any time
- do not cost any money.





Anyone in Aotearoa New Zealand
can contact **Need to Talk** by
text / phone call on:

1737



You can contact **Youthline** to talk if
you are:



- a young person
- supporting a young person.



You can contact Youthline by:

- **phone:**

0800 376 633

- **text:**

234





You can also contact Youthline by:

- **WhatsApp message:**

09 886 56 96



- **webchat** on their website:

<https://youthline.co.nz/web-chat-counselling>



Support for mental health

If you have a family member who is having mental health challenges you can contact **Yellow Brick Road**.



Yellow Brick Road gives mental health support to whānau / families of people experiencing mental distress.



You can find out more about how to contact your local Yellow Brick Road office on their website at:

<https://bit.ly/49DqSzx>



This website is **not** in Easy Read.



Support for life after being in the ICU

MyLifeAfterICU is a website that has information / tools for:



- people who have been in ICU
- whānau / families
- caregivers.



You can find out more on their website at:

www.mylifeaftericu.com



This website is **not** in Easy Read.

Support for sepsis



Sepsis Trust NZ has information / tools about sepsis on their **website** at:

www.sepsis.org.nz



Sepsis Australia also has information / tools about sepsis on their **website** at:

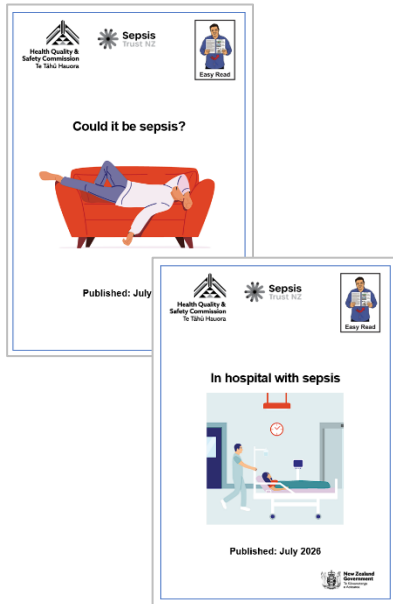
www.australiansepsisnetwork.net.au



The **Health Quality & Safety Commission** also has information / tools about sepsis on their **website** at:

www.hqsc.govt.nz/sepsis-patient-resources

Where to find more Easy Read information about sepsis



There are 2 other Easy Read documents about sepsis called:

- **Could it be sepsis?**
- **In hospital with sepsis.**



You can find these Easy Read at:

<https://hqsc-sepsis-whanau>



This information has been written by Health Quality & Safety Commission Te Tāhū Hauora.



The Health Quality & Safety Commission is part of the New Zealand Government.



It has been translated into Easy Read by the Make it Easy Kia Māmā Mai service of People First New Zealand Ngā Tāngata Tuatahi.



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