What will happen when I go home?

You may be given a rehabilitation plan by your physiotherapist to help you get strong again and a report of your hospital stay will be sent to your GP. Recovering from sepsis can take time, and you may have reduced strength.

- you will be very tired, and will need to sleep and rest a lot. You may have been seriously ill and your body and mind need time to get better
- you may be very weak, may have lost a lot of weight and may find it difficult to walk around. You may also find it tiring talking to people. Begin by building up your activity slowly and rest when you are tired
- your skin may be dry, itchy and peel. It may help to put moisturiser on your skin. Your nails may also break easily
- you may notice changes to your hair and some may begin to fall out some weeks after your illness. It is unlikely it will all fall out, it usually just gets very thin and then starts to grow again
- it can help to have special nutritional drinks, like Complan® or Build up® to help you put on weight again. You can get these on prescription by asking your GP or you can buy them from a chemist or supermarket
- you might find it difficult to eat again. Build up slowly by having small meals and healthy snacks when you feel like it.

It can feel very frustrating once you are home, because all the things you could do easily before can suddenly feel very difficult or frightening. You have to remember how unwell you may have been and try and see that you have made progress, even if it doesn’t feel like it sometimes.

Sepsis can be a very serious condition. You and your relatives may have gone through an extremely challenging time throughout this period. But this illness is a very well-known condition for which we have well-established treatments and interventions. We all work extremely hard to get our patients over this condition and our treatment aims are to get you back into the best physical condition that you can be.

So stay positive - We can beat Sepsis together.

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Sepsis: A Guide For Patients & Relatives

What is Sepsis?

Sepsis was previously known as septicaemia or blood poisoning. Sepsis is the body’s reaction to an infection and means the body attacks its own organs and tissues.

Different types of Sepsis

Many people can have ‘mild’ sepsis which can make them feel ill but they then get better without needing treatment in hospital. Mild sepsis can result from chest infections, urine infections and other minor illnesses.

However, other patients develop severe sepsis, which means they become seriously ill and need hospital treatment straight away.

Why does Sepsis Happen?

The condition is caused by the way the body responds to micro-organisms such as bacteria getting into your body. This infection may have started anywhere in your body. The infection may be only in one part of your body, or it may be widespread. It may have been from:

- a chest infection causing pneumonia
- a urine infection in the bladder
- a problem in the abdomen, such as a burst ulcer or a hole in the bowel
- an infected cut or bite
- a wound.

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Sepsis: A guide for Patients and Relatives by Dr Ron Daniels. IL515v1. First published 07/2016, Review Date 07/2018
Sepsis can be caused by a huge variety of different bacteria – some of these you might have heard of, such as streptococcus, e-coli, MRSA, and C diff. Most cases of sepsis are caused by common bacteria which we all come into contact with every day without them making us ill.

Sometimes, though, the body responds abnormally to these infections, and causes sepsis.

**What Severe Sepsis does to your body**

To begin with, you may have felt like you were developing a flu-like illness. You may have:

- felt very cold and shivery
- felt very hot and looked flushed
- had a high temperature
- had aching muscles
- felt very tired
- have had sickness and / or diarrhoea (upset stomach)
- not felt like eating
- seemed confused or drunk, or had slurred speech

**What treatment might I have for sepsis?**

- Giving you many strong drugs to help you beat the infection. These include antibiotics, anti-fungal or anti-viral drugs depending on what caused the infection. Sometimes it is necessary for the medical team to try different drugs to find the ones that will best treat your illness, and you may have got temporarily worse or better as the new drugs were introduced

- Helping your body’s functions until you are well enough to do these for yourself. This includes helping your blood pressure (with extra fluids or strong drugs) and organs (such as a machine for your kidneys, which is called dialysis or filtration)

- Helping you to breathe oxygen may have been given using a tight fitting mask or a hood that looked like a space helmet

- Making sure you have enough food and liquid. This is done by putting a thin tube up your nose and down into your stomach or by putting a tube in your hand or arm called a drip to give food and fluids

You will have been given pain relief if you needed it or medicines to keep you drowsy or asleep, making the treatment more comfortable for you.

**What if I need to go to the Critical Care unit?**

Critical Care is where the most ill patients in a hospital are treated and nursed.

In Critical Care:

- you can be carefully watched and monitored, including checking your pulse; blood pressure; breathing; oxygen levels; how much liquid you take in and how much you urinate (how much water you pass). These checks are all very important because staff can quickly change your treatment as needed

- Staff can give you treatment including support for your major organs, like your heart, kidneys and lungs

- There are highly trained doctors, nurses and physiotherapists who look after you, and support your relatives by explaining what is happening

- Nurses look after fewer patients, so there may be one nurse looking after only one or two patients.

**Post Sepsis Recovery – Rehabilitation**

Rehabilitation means things that will help you get better after having sepsis. Rehabilitation starts when you are in hospital by slowly beginning to move around and look after yourself again – for example, washing yourself, sitting up, standing and then walking, taking yourself to the toilet etc. You will be working with physiotherapists and they will show you exercises to help you.