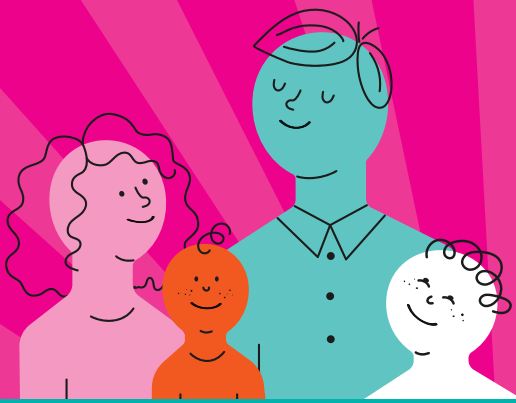
Sepsis Trust NZ



SEPSIS AND YOU

A guide for children and their parents, caregivers and whānau.

POTTER MASONIC TRUST

This information booklet on paediatric sepsis has been created by Sepsis Trust NZ, thanks to funding from the Potter Trust.

Sepsis Trust NZ



FOR YOU (the child or young person)

A MESSAGE FOR YOU

If you are reading this, it means you have been very unwell with something called sepsis. That might have been scary. It might have been confusing.

You might not remember everything that happened - and that's okay.

The most important thing to know is this:
You did nothing wrong.
Sepsis is not your fault.

Lots of doctors, nurses and grown-ups worked together to help your body get better. And you have already shown how strong you are. You might still feel tired. You might feel wobbly, sore, worried, or not quite like yourself yet.

That's normal. Healing takes time. And everyone heals at their own pace. You are not alone.

WHAT IS SEPSIS?

Sepsis can happen when your body is trying very hard to fight a bad germ.

Usually, your body is very good at fighting germs. But sometimes it gets a bit confused and goes into "overdrive." Instead of helping, it can make you feel very sick.

Doctors and nurses know how to treat sepsis quickly. That's why you were in hospital - so your body could get the help it needed.

WHAT HAPPENED IN HOSPITAL?

You may have:

- Had special medicine (called antibiotics)
- Had fluids through a small tube (a drip)
- Had oxygen to help you breathe
- Been connected to machines that made beeping sounds

The beeping machines weren't doing anything scary. They were just helping the doctors and nurses keep a close eye on you.

If you were in PICU (Paediatric Intensive Care), that's a special part of the hospital where very sick children go so they can get extra care and attention.

It might have looked busy or noisy, but it's a place full of people whose job is to keep children safe.

"The beeping machines are just checking on you. They're helpers."



RECOVERING FROM SEPSIS

Getting better after sepsis is a bit like charging a battery.
It doesn't happen all at once.

Some days you might feel:

- Very tired
- A bit sore
- Wobbly or weak
- Worried or upset
- Good one day and not so good the next

All of that is normal.

To help your body recover, you can:

- Get lots of rest
- Eat and drink when you can
- Move gently when your doctor says it's okay
- Tell a grown-up if something doesn't feel right

Every small step forward is a win.

There is no rush.



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FOR PARENTS, CAREGIVERS & WHĀNAU

A MESSAGE FOR YOU

Watching your child become critically unwell is frightening and traumatic.
Even once the immediate danger has passed, it can take time for your nervous system to settle. You may feel:

- Exhausted
- Tearful
- Anxious
- On edge
- Relieved but overwhelmed

All of this is normal.

Supporting your child's recovery is important - but so is caring for yourself. Your wellbeing matters.

UNDERSTANDING RECOVERY

Recovery from paediatric sepsis varies widely. Some children bounce back quickly. Others experience ongoing physical, cognitive or emotional effects for weeks or months. There is no fixed timeline.

Physical

- Increased fatigue
- Reduced stamina
- Sleep disruption
- Headaches
- Muscle weakness
- Appetite changes
- Increased sensitivity to light, noise or busy environments

Thinking and concentration

- Short-term memory difficulties
- Slower processing
- Difficulty concentrating
- Finding school tasks more challenging than before

Emotional wellbeing

- Anxiety (especially about becoming unwell again)
- Mood changes or irritability
- Nightmares or flashbacks
- Reduced confidence
- Withdrawal from usual activities

Many of these symptoms improve with time.

WHEN TO SEEK FURTHER SUPPORT

Speak to your GP if, more than a month after discharge, your child continues to experience:

- Ongoing low mood or anxiety affecting daily life
- Persistent sleep disturbance or nightmares
- Significant behavioural changes
- Difficulty managing normal school tasks
- Physical symptoms that are not improving
- Or anything that simply does not feel right

Trust your instincts.

SUPPORTING YOUR CHILD'S RECOVERY

Time
Allow recovery to unfold gradually. Avoid rushing a return to full schedules.

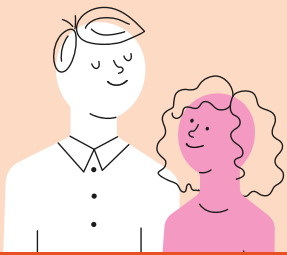
Plan, pace and prioritise
Encourage gentle activity. Balance rest with small, achievable goals.

Sleep
Re-establish routine slowly. Seek help if sleep difficulties persist.

Nutrition and hydration
Small, frequent meals can be easier than large ones.

Emotional space
Create opportunities for your child to talk - but don't force it. Some children process through play or art rather than conversation.

School
Work with teachers to create a gradual re-entry plan if needed.



WILL MY CHILD GET SEPSIS AGAIN?

Most children do not experience repeat episodes. However, following a serious infection, some children may be more vulnerable to future infections for a period of time.

The most important thing is early recognition of serious illness and seeking medical review promptly if concerned.

POST-SEPSIS SYNDROME (PSS)

Some children experience a cluster of ongoing symptoms known as Post Sepsis Syndrome.

There is no single treatment - management focuses on addressing individual symptoms and supporting gradual recovery.

Further support and information is available at: www.sepsis.org.nz

SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES

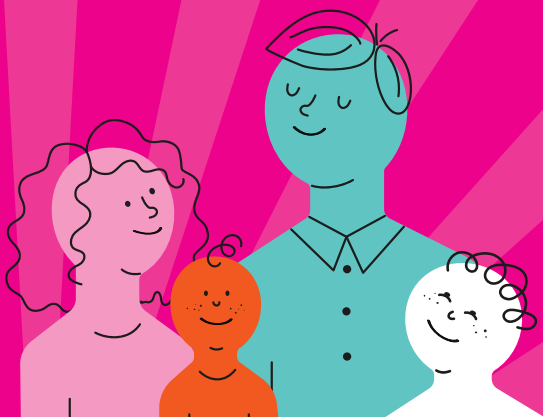
The NZ Sepsis Trust offers:

Information resources (visit: www.sepsis.org.nz)
Online support groups (register here: www.sepsis.org.nz/support)
Sepsis Trust NZ Recovery Support and Connect group (join here: Sepsis Support NZ)
Sepsis Trust NZ Facebook page (follow us here: www.facebook.com/sepsistrust.nz)

You can also seek support through your GP, counsellors, school support staff, or trusted community networks.

You are not expected to carry this alone.

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