

# Sepsis, Self Care, Pediatric

Sepsis is a serious illness that may require intensive care in a hospital. The following information explains what you need to know to manage your child's condition after he or she is discharged from the hospital.

## What are the risks?

After being treated for sepsis and discharged from the hospital, your child may be at a higher risk for certain problems. These problems may be physical or mental.

Physical problems:

- Weakness and tiredness.
- Shortness of breath.
- Pain in many areas of the body.
- Difficulty walking.
- Dry, itchy skin.
- Lack of appetite. This may lead to weight loss.
- Organ failure.

Mental problems:

- Difficulty sleeping.
- Depression.
- Confusion.
- Anxiety and worry caused by having gone through a bad experience (*post-traumatic stress disorder, PTSD*).
- Low self-esteem.

## Follow these instructions at home:

### Medicines

- Give your child over-the-counter and prescription medicines only as told by your child's health care provider.
- Give your child antibiotic or anti-fungal medicines as told by your child's health care provider. **Do not** stop giving the antibiotic or anti-fungal medicines even if your child starts to feel better.
- **Do not** give your child aspirin because of the association with Reye's syndrome.

### Eating and drinking

- Give your child a healthy, balanced diet. This includes plenty of fruits and vegetables, whole grains, low-fat dairy products, and lean protein. Ask the health care provider if your child should avoid certain foods.
- Make sure your child drinks enough fluid to keep his or her urine pale yellow.



## Activity

- Have your child rest as told by the health care provider.
- He or she should avoid sitting for a long time without moving, and should get up to take short walks every 1–2 hours. This is important to improve blood flow and breathing. Help your child if he or she feels weak or unsteady.
- Have your child return to his or her normal activities as told by the health care provider. Ask your child's health care provider what activities are safe for your child.
- Let your child try to set small, achievable goals each week, such as dressing oneself, bathing, or walking up the stairs. It may take a while for him or her to rebuild strength.
- Let your child try to exercise regularly if he or she feels healthy enough to do so. Ask your health care provider what exercises are safe for your child.

## Preventing infection

- Keep your child's vaccinations up to date.
- Wash your hands and your child's hands often with soap and water. If soap and water are not available, use hand sanitizer.
- Help your child practice good hygiene. Keep cuts clean and covered until they heal.



## Managing stress

Help your child find ways to cope with stress and anxiety. These may include:

- Breathing exercises.
- Meditation or yoga.
- Listening to music.
- Organized exercise and play.
- Spending time with people who make your child feel safe.
- Finding a support group or family counselor.

## General instructions

- Make sure your child is getting enough sleep for his or her age. Follow these instructions to help your child get better sleep:
  - Keep naptime and bedtime schedules consistent.
  - Make sure your child's bedroom is cool, quiet, and dark.
  - During the 1-2 hours before bedtime, avoid:
    - Giving your child a large meal.
    - Giving your child caffeinated drinks.
    - Active play, television, computers, or video games.
- Talk to trusted family members and friends about your child's condition. Explain his or her symptoms to them, and let them know that you are working with a health care provider to treat the condition. This can provide you and your child with one way to get support and guidance.
- Keep all follow-up visits as told by your child's health care provider. This is important.

## Questions to ask your child's health care provider:

- What physical and emotional changes do I need to report?
- Do I need to have someone with my child all the time?

## Contact a health care provider if your child:

- Does not appear to be getting better or regaining strength.
- Is tired all the time.
- Has trouble falling asleep, staying asleep, or nightmares.
- Has signs of depression, such as:
  - A persistently sad, cranky, or irritable mood.
  - Loss of enjoyment in activities that used to bring him or her joy.
  - Change in weight or eating.
  - Avoiding friends or family members.
  - Feelings of guilt or worthlessness.
- Shows signs that he or she is not meeting developmental milestones appropriate for his or her age.

## Get help right away if your child:

- Is 3 months to 3 years old and has a temperature of 102.2°F (39°C) or higher.
- Is younger than 3 months and has a temperature of 100.4°F (38°C) or higher.
- Has difficulty breathing.
- Has a rapid or skipping heartbeat.
- Becomes very confused, limp, or unresponsive.
- Develops blotchy, pale, or blue skin.
- Has an infection that is getting worse or not getting better.
- Your child sees, hears, tastes, smells or feels things that are not present (*hallucinates*).
- Your child has serious thoughts about hurting him or herself or others.

**These symptoms may represent a serious problem that is an emergency. Do not wait to see if the symptoms will go away. Get medical help for your child right away. Call your local emergency services (911 in the U.S.).**

## Summary

- Sepsis is a serious illness that may require intensive care in a hospital. Your child may experience long-term health effects after he or she is discharged from the hospital.
- Have your child rest and gradually return to normal activities. Ask the health care provider what activities are safe for your child.
- Help your child find ways to cope with stress and anxiety.
- Keep all follow-up visits as told by your child's health care provider. This is important.

This information is not intended to replace advice given to you by your health care provider. Make sure you discuss any questions you have with your health care provider.