

The return home: what to expect

There are many issues to address during recovery from critical illness. While you may do quite well and have a very steady recovery process, you might also be one of the common folks who really has a bunch of issues that need to be addressed before you can really get back to your normal self. Tackling all of these issues is not possible or the intention of this website, but we think it is important to help you at least get a feel for what you (or your loved one) may be dealing with for the next weeks and months.

When you do return home, you may feel physically weak, have difficulty thinking, or even have times when you get nervous by remembering events that occurred in the ICU. You need to know that it is not weird or strange for you to experience these types of bothersome feelings. Obviously some people have more trouble with these symptoms than others. Since this website is mainly focused on things about how you “think,” we’d like to say that you might find yourself being more forgetful than before the ICU stay. Some people have difficulty balancing their checkbooks or planning a meal or going shopping. Sometimes it’s hard to go right back to work because you can’t concentrate or have trouble juggling all the tasks that used to be so easy. You may even be more irritable or depressed. People who experience these difficulties often get frustrated or upset by them and this may spill over to the family as well. It is important to talk to your family and your doctor about these issues. Some people get therapy, different types of physical and even “cognitive” rehabilitation after they survive the ICU. Others start on medications depending on the main problems and how long they are lasting. The good news is that most of these problems will go away over the next few months to a year, though in some they can last longer.