

LIFE AFTER ARDS

WHAT TO EXPECT AFTER ARDS

THIS GUIDE DESCRIBES HOW IT
MAY FEEL AFTER SURVIVING
ARDS, AND THE RECOVERY
PROCESS.



WHAT IS ARDS?

Acute Respiratory Distress Syndrome (ARDS) is a condition which affects the lungs, causing the alveoli (the small air sacs in the lungs) to become filled with fluid.

This makes it extremely difficult for the lungs to carry out their normal function.

When this cannot happen, the lungs may fail and can become life threatening.



WHAT IS NEXT AFTER ARDS?

After surviving ARDS, you may need to rebuild your strength. At first, you may need help with bathing, sitting up, walking, using the restroom, and performing other everyday activities.

If you have been severely affected, you may be transferred to a rehabilitation facility. The goal of rehabilitation is to restore you to your previous level of health, or as close to it as possible. If you are discharged to your home, you may have appointments for follow-up as you work to recuperate. Begin your rehabilitation slowly and rest when you are tired

ABOUT ARDS ALLIANCE

The ARDS Alliance is here to provide support and information to patients, relatives, loved ones, professionals and anyone who has had their lives touched by ARDS.

We regularly update our website and provide more detailed resources and articles for all elements related to ARDS and recovery.

If you have a suggestion, or have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us at:
contact@ardsalliance.org

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FINDING WAYS TO HELP YOURSELF RECOVER AT HOME

Here are some tips that may help you recover once you go home:

- Set small goals each week, such as walking up the stairs or taking a bath.
- Rest and allow your body to rebuild its strength.
- Talk to family and friends about your feelings.
- Record your thoughts, feelings, and milestones in a journal.
- Learn about ARDS to help understand what happened.
- Eat a healthy and balanced diet.
- Exercise as you feel able.
- Make a list to take with you when you visit your health care provider for check-ups.

THE EFFECT ON CAREGIVERS

Caregivers of loved ones with ARDS can also be affected. Stress, anxiety, and depression are not uncommon among family members and friends who have loved ones recovering from ARDS-related health issues. It is very important that they take time to care for themselves, as well.

Visit ARDSAlliance.org to download a copy of *Understanding and Recovery from ARDS: A Caregiver's Guide*.

POSSIBLE LONG-TERM EFFECTS OF ARDS

Many people who have ARDS experience a full recovery. However, some are at risk for a decreased quality of life. Lung function may also be permanently reduced, leading to difficulties in breathing and decreased oxygen intake.

LONG-TERM OUTCOMES

Some people who survive ARDS experience a group of health issues. These may not become apparent until several weeks after hospitalization. They may include:

- Insomnia and nightmares
- Disabling muscle, joint pain
- Decreased mental (cognitive) functioning
- Loss of self-esteem

Most often, the problems listed here do resolve over time. Some hospitals have follow-up clinics for people who survived serious illness to help after discharge. Ask if your facility or doctor's office provides this service, or if there are local resources available to help you while you recover. If you are not improving or you are finding it difficult to cope, call your healthcare provider for help.

TO LEARN MORE ABOUT LIFE AFTER ARDS, VISIT [ARDSALLIANCE.ORG](https://ARDSAlliance.org)

ARDS CAN BE LIFE-THREATENING

ARDS, or Acute Respiratory Distress Syndrome, is a severe lung condition. It can be a complication of serious illnesses or injuries, including sepsis, pneumonia, and trauma. ARDS is a medical emergency that requires immediate care in an intensive care unit (ICU).

Symptoms of ARDS can include severe shortness of breath, rapid breathing, low blood oxygen levels despite oxygen therapy, and confusion or agitation due to low oxygen levels. Because ARDS affects the ability of lungs to provide oxygen to the body's organs, it can lead to organ failure and other serious health issues.

Management of ARDS often involves mechanical ventilation to help the patient breathe, alongside treatments addressing the underlying cause of the condition. Recovery can vary, with some patients experiencing long-term effects such as reduced lung function, muscle weakness, and psychological impacts.

For comprehensive information on ARDS, including its causes, symptoms, treatment, and recovery, resources such as the American Lung Association or dedicated medical websites provide valuable insights and support for patients and their families.

Understanding ARDS is crucial for managing and mitigating its effects on health and quality of life.