Psychological recovery after trauma

Recognise distress and connect screening to care.

RECOVERY & COMPLICATIONS / ADULT TRAUMA

Mental health and substance-use needs can affect recovery even when the physical reconstruction is progressing well.

01 Create a safe conversation

Use respectful, trauma-informed communication. Ask about mood, sleep, intrusive memories, avoidance, substance use and daily function. Consider prior difficulties and current social support without assuming a diagnosis.

02 Screen appropriately

Use validated tools and a pathway matched to the clinical setting. Screening identifies people who need assessment; it does not establish a diagnosis. Repeat assessment when early illness or cognitive impairment limits participation.

03 Link findings to action

Positive screens need a defined assessment, referral and follow-up process. Respond to urgent safety concerns immediately through the local clinical pathway. Include the patient in decisions and explain available support.

04 Follow beyond discharge

Distress may resolve, persist or emerge later. Coordinate hospital and community care, provide clear contacts and review access barriers. Integrate psychological recovery with physical rehabilitation and return-to-life goals.

WATCH POINT Do not attribute persistent pain or disability to psychological causes without appropriate medical reassessment.

DISCUSS WITH THE TEAM

If today's screen is positive, who will assess the patient and ensure follow-up?

READ THE SOURCES

[1] ACS: Mental health and substance use in the acute trauma patient (2022).