

Patient information

Critical Care - What can I do? A guide for friends and relatives

A person is usually admitted to Critical Care unexpectedly. It can be very distressing and worrying seeing your loved one attached to different machines and drips; and very normal to feel helpless and eager to understand everything. Staff are very happy to answer any questions you may have. You will also notice a display board in the reception area explaining different machine and pumps you will see.

Patient Profile

The bedside nurse will ask you to complete this to enable us to know about the person we are caring for not only promote individualised care but to aid discussion and goal making when they are better able to communicate. For example, knowing and then playing music that a person enjoys can help alleviate any pain or anxiety they may have. Feel free to bring in their personal electrical device for them to use. We do have MP3 players, with headphones, for use if needed.

Diaries

The nurses will keep a daily account of a person's stay if they are sedated and require the support of a ventilator. It also benefits the patient if you are able to keep a record of what happens, from your perspective, as your loved one is also missing messages sent from friends and family and missing events outside of Critical Care. Both records help fill in the blank the person has afterwards and aids their recovery.

Look after yourself

Your loved one's condition can be up and down and this can be both physically and emotionally exhausting. It's important to pace yourself making space for eating regular meals and taking time to rest and sleep even though you may not feel like it. This will help you be better able to support them in the long run and enables your loved one to rest also.

Please make use of the Relatives room, where there are refreshment facilities available, to enable you to get some headspace.

Daily updates

We hope that you are satisfied with staff updates when you call. It can be quite difficult finding that your loved one's condition can fluctuate in such a short space of time.

The 'up and down' nature of an ICU patient is very common and emotionally tiring for you. Please ask for clarification if you don't understand phrases used.

Visits

We have an open visiting policy however for our 'awake' patients we find that they tire easily and benefit from space to be able to relax without expectations from visitors or interventions from staff. We ask for your support in achieving this. The allocated time can be agreed between yourself and the bedside nurse but usually works best mid-afternoon.

We recommend that children under the age of 12 are only able to visit in exceptional circumstances and that younger adults aged 12-16 years should be accompanied by an adult. Feel free to discuss this with the bedside nurse/nurse in charge if have particular needs.

If your visit happens to coincide with the ward round, we will politely ask you to have a small break to ensure privacy and confidentiality of neighboring patients' details.

Please make use of refreshment options or have a walk outside. We will let you know as soon as you're able to come back in. We appreciate the frustration that this may bring alongside trying to time visits around nursing care/physio interventions etc. but hope you understand the rationale behind the decision.

Getting help

Critical Care can be both a stressful and overwhelming experience for you and your family. Please remember, as a team, we are here to ensure that you remain updated, and your concerns and queries are listened too.

Sometimes people can find they become anxious particularly hearing numerous alarms from various machines and monitors; and the 'up and down' nature of a patient's condition. Another big stress point can be when your loved one is ready to go to the ward.

You may be worried about your children and wonder how best to explain things to them and what you should do. Your bedside nurse can also provide an advice sheet regarding how to approach this. We also have colouring booklets available which help explain the ICU environment.

If you would like the opportunity to talk to a chaplain, please let the bedside nurse know who can arrange this for you. They are available to provide a listening ear regardless of faith persuasion/if any.

You may observe many changes in your loved one and wonder what recovery will look like and what support you will have. The follow up sister is able to help you with this. Please get in touch by ringing 01284 712543 or alternatively by emailing criticalcarefollowup@wsh.nhs.uk.

Personal care

If you wish too, you are welcome to brush your loved one's hair or apply hand cream and massage their hands. The bedside nurse can give you items needed if don't have any with you and support you in the process. Your loved one may appreciate a special item such as a soft blanket to make them feel more normal.

Support

When appropriate, to your loved one's condition, we pause their sedation to see if they can manage without it with a view to potentially removing their breathing tube. This is usually done in the morning, and it may help them to have you there with them providing support. This may feel scary, but the bedside nurse will be able to support you through the process. Equally they are happy to support your loved one through this if you are unable to be here or don't feel able too.

Delirium

Some people can experience acute confusion and see, feel or hear things that aren't real. This can be very frightening for them and distressing and worrying for you. This can be caused by infection, strong medications particularly if need the support of a ventilator. Delirium is temporary but can fluctuate. The bedside nurse can help explain more about this and management of it. You can also speak to the nurse in charge or the follow up sister.

It helps for your loved one to hear a familiar voice so the bedside nurse may ring you so you can speak to them when you aren't here. We also support video calls. When able to visit try holding their hands and reassure them verbally that they are in hospital and are safe. If they are sedated or unable to communicate try reading a favourite book, for example, as it is comforting for them to hear your voice. To help orientate them in a strange environment please bring in some photos to display, such as loved ones and pets.

Outside visits

As a person improves it can be disheartening for the patient trying to come to terms with what has happened and the impact of it. Sometimes they can feel quite low in mood and it can really help if able to get out of the unit even for a short while. This needs to be organised safely and with consideration, but we are happy to discuss this with you and involve you in the process. If we are unable to support this, on occasion, we will explain and try to facilitate on another day.

Rehab

When your loved one starts to improve, they often find they are much weaker, find it difficult to concentrate and sleep and can easily get bored and fed up. Introducing fun activities can really help with this. We have lots of items available for you to do when you visit. Our rehab trolley contains games, crosswords, coloring sheets, to name a few, that you can do together to pass the time. We also have a RITA (Reminiscence/Rehab Interactive therapy Activity) tablet which you can also use. With this you can enjoy watching films together, download current newspaper of your choice, and have further game/craft options to enjoy.

Pet visits

If your loved one is here for some time, they may be missing a much-loved pet. Every week a PAT dog called Chance visits the unit which we all enjoy. If it would be of benefit; we can support your pet to visit; however, there is criteria that needs to be fulfilled to ensure safety in a clinical environment. If interested, then please speak to the bedside nurse or nurse in charge.

Satisfaction questionnaires

We would appreciate if you could take the time to complete a questionnaire. Please scan below QR code or alternatively your bedside nurse can provide you with a paper copy if preferred.



Fundraising

Charitable donations are invaluable in enabling us to enhance the care we are able to provide for our patients and relatives and we are thankful for the difference each donation has made.

If you wish to donate you can do so via 'My WiSH' charity. Email fundraising@wsh.nhs.uk or Tel 01284 712952



Useful websites

www.icudelirium.org

www.icusteps.org

(Also provides information guides in different languages and visiting for children)

www.sepsistrust.org

www.criticalcarerecovery.com

If you would like any information regarding access to the West Suffolk Hospital and its facilities, please visit the website for AccessAble (formerly DisabledGo)

<https://www.accessable.co.uk>



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