

Cardiovascular Intensive Care Unit (CVICU)



Information for Visitors

Welcome to Our Unit

On behalf of the staff in the Cardiovascular Intensive Care Unit (CVICU), I would like to welcome you. We know that this is a difficult time for you, and we would like to offer our assistance and support. This was written to provide you with information about the CVICU and some of our routines.

We hope that you will find the following information useful.

Linda Flockhart
Nurse Manager

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CVICU vision statement

Creating a healthy and caring environment for all.

CVICU mission statement

We are proud to be a family committed to specialized care, creating an optimal experience for patients and their families.

Goal of the CVICU

Our goal is to provide the best possible care for your family. By working together, we can make sure that our plan of care is both suitable and optimal for your family. You are an important member of our team; you know your relative best and your input is important to us.

Coping with a critical illness

Your relative is with us because their condition requires the skill of highly trained, compassionate personnel and specialized, modern technology. Our unit will provide for, and meet, both of these needs.

While it is your relative who is seriously ill, this experience is a traumatic one for your entire family. We are aware of this and will do our best to support and care for both your relative and you. Throughout the illness and recovery process you may, at times, feel that it is "one step forwards and two steps backward." It is important to try to take one day at a time, remain hopeful and try to encourage this in your relative. The body needs time to heal. By working together as a team, we can all help your relative cope with this stressful situation.

What to expect after the surgery

- After the surgery, your relative will be brought directly from the Operating room to the CVICU.
- After the operation is complete, the Cardiovascular surgeon will speak to you in the 3rd floor Clinical Services Building Surgical waiting area.
- A volunteer will take you to the 2nd floor Peter Munk Cardiac Centre (PMCC) CVICU waiting area and arrange for you to visit your loved one.

When you first see your loved one, they will have finished their surgery, will still be asleep and will not be able to talk or move. They will be supported by a breathing machine and intravenous fluids and medications. They will be getting pain medication to keep them comfortable.

Once your loved one is warm and stable, they will be woken up and the breathing machine will be removed. The amount of time this takes depends on many factors and is unpredictable. It depends on when your loved one is ready.

It may be difficult to see your loved one attached to machines, but know that they are kept comfortable and are closely monitored. It might also help to know that the patient usually has no memory of this time.

Visiting

We know how important you are to your relative and we appreciate how difficult this situation is for your family. Visiting in the CVICU is flexible to meet your needs. Please speak with your bedside nurse to plan and co-ordinate visiting times.

You should know that the CVICU may be a difficult place for young children, so children must be with an adult at all times while in the unit. The bedside nurse can help plan these visits.

Spokesperson

To allow the nurse to spend more time caring for your relative, we ask that your family appoint one (1) person as a spokesperson or contact person.

- This person should be the one who will telephone the CVICU for "updates" and, relay this information to all the other family members and friends.
- CVICU staff will call this person if they need to talk to your family about your relative's condition or care.

Family meetings

While the spokesperson can speak to the medical staff at anytime, we will also arrange family meetings if your family, or if the CVICU staff think it is necessary. These meetings will be held in the CVICU at a time when everyone can join in. Family meetings provide a chance for the members of the healthcare team and the family to meet and talk about the patient's progress.

Family Partnership in Care

We believe that family members are an important part in the care of our patients. You may help your loved one by giving special mouth and skin care, encouraging breathing, and helping with leg and arm exercises. Your bedside nurse will work with you to do this safely.

You will also be taught how to communicate with your relative in case they are on a breathing machine and cannot talk. A routine of daily care will be organized and you may help at any time. We look forward to working with you to help your loved one recover from their surgery.

The CVICU Team

Many people will take part in the care of your family member. The following are those whom you will meet most often:

- **CV Surgeon** - this is the doctor who operated on your loved one.
- **ICU Registered Nurse (RN)** - this is a nurse with special training who will be with your relative 24 hours a day while in the ICU.
- **Surgical and Anaesthesia Fellows** - we have 2 medical doctors (Fellows) who provide 24 hour medical coverage for your relative. A Fellow or Staff doctor is always available in the ICU.
- **CV Anaesthetist (Staff Physician)** - this is the doctor who is in charge of the unit and provides the daily medical care for your loved one. Every Monday, one of our 8 CV Anaesthetists will take charge for the week.
- **Consultants** - other doctors will be contacted as needed to make sure the best possible care is given.
- **Nurse Manager** - this is the nurse who is in charge of the unit.
- **Patient Care Coordinator (PCC)** - helps the manager to coordinate patient care
- **Charge Nurse** - this nurse co-ordinates the functioning of the unit-shift by shift.
- **Physiotherapist (PT)** - provides an exercise program to maintain and improve strength in the limbs and to assist in keeping the lungs clear.
- **Occupational Therapist (OT)** - in the ICU, the OT provides splints that prevent muscle tightening and maintains proper positioning of hands and feet.
- **Respiratory Therapist (RT)** - is responsible for the "breathing machine" (ventilator) and will assess your relative's breathing status every day.
- **Dietician** - will make sure that your relative receives the best possible nutrition either by eating the right kinds of foods or by a special tube, if there are any swallowing problems.
- **Social Worker** - can provide family counseling, assistance and support, coordinate family conferences and talk about discharge-planning options (see Family Meetings).
- **PCA** – Patient care assistants help the nurse with basic care and mobility
- **Spiritual Care Professionals** - are available if you need their services. Please ask the bedside nurse to contact them for you.
- **Volunteers** – our volunteers manage the waiting area and help to organize your visits into the CVICU. They direct you to other areas and services within the hospital.

Self-care

Please remember that you are a very important member of the team. You know your relative the best, so we need your help to plan the best care possible.

During this stressful time, you must take care of yourself. Try to eat and sleep properly. Taking time away from the hospital is very important. Please know that while you are away, your relative will never be alone in the CVICU.

General information

Telephone and cell phone use

There is a visitor phone in the CVICU waiting room. Please use it before visiting to make sure that it is safe to do so. Also, please be patient when asked to remain in the waiting room - there is always a good reason for this.

Out of respect for other visitors using the waiting area, we ask that you use your cell phone in the hallways and not in the waiting area. A public phone can be found in the hallway outside of the waiting area.

Hand hygiene and illness

Hand sanitizer gel is available throughout the unit. Please use it to clean your hands each time you enter the unit and, before leaving the CVICU.

Please do not visit the CVICU if you are feeling sick, have a cough or fever, diarrhea, nausea or vomiting. Wait until you feel better.

Food court

The Food Court is located on the ground floor of the Eaton Wing and is open daily 7:00 a.m. to 9:30 p.m., including holidays.

Where to stay while your relative is at UHN

Though these are always changing, UHN tries to keep a list of local hotels, bed and breakfasts and short-term rentals in the area. Some provide a discount or hospital rate. Please let the staff know if you need a copy of this list.

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